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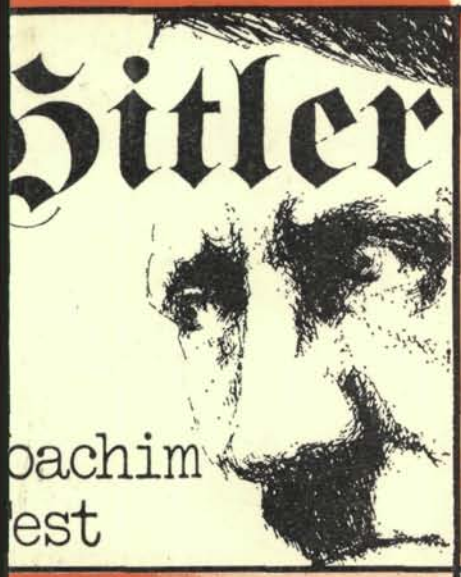

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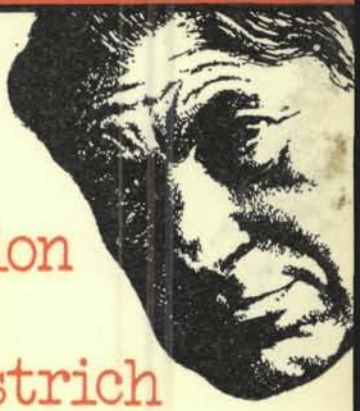

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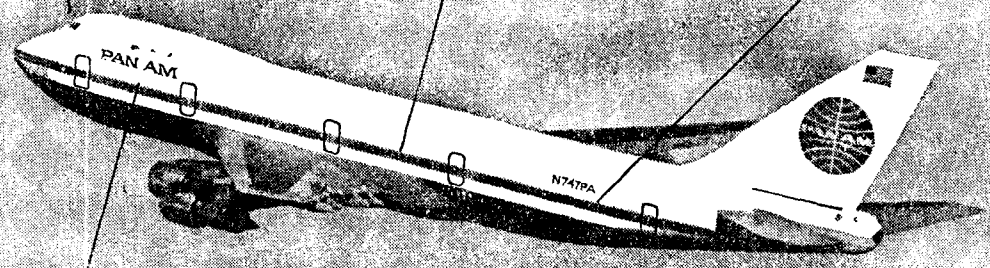

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William Trevor

The Tennis Court

OLD MRS ASHBURTON used to drive about the lanes in a governess-cart drawn by a donkey she called Trot. We often met her as we cycled home from school, when my brother and my sister were at the Grammar School and I was still at Miss Pritchard's Primary. Of the three of us, I was Mrs Ashburton's favourite, and I don't know why that was except that I was the youngest. "Hullo, my Matilda," Mrs Ashburton would whisper in her throaty, crazy-sounding way. "Matilda," she'd repeat, lingering over the name I so disliked, drawing each syllable away from the next. "Dear Matilda." She was excessively thin, rather tall, and frail-looking. We made allowances for her because she was eighty-one.

Usually when we met her she was looking for wild flowers, or if it was winter or autumn just sitting in her governess-cart in some farmer's gateway, letting the donkey graze the farmer's grass. In spring she used to root out plants from the hedges with a little trowel. Most of them were weeds, my brother said; and looking back on it now, I realise that it wasn't for wild flowers, or weeds, or grazing for her donkey, that she drove about the lanes. It was in order to meet us cycling back from school.

"There's a tennis court at Challacombe Manor," she said one day in May, 1939. "Any time you ever wanted to play, Dick." She stared at my brother with piercing black eyes that were the colour of quality coal. She was eccentric, standing there in a long, very old and bald fur coat, stroking the ears of her donkey while he nibbled a hedge. Her hat was attached to her grey hair by a number of brass hat-pins. The hat was of faded green felt, the hat-pins had quite large knobs at the ends of them, inlaid with pieces of green glass. Green, Mrs Ashburton often remarked, was her favourite colour, and she used to remove these hat-pins to show us the glass additions, emphasising that they were valueless. Her bald fur coat was valueless also, she assured us, and not even in its heyday would it have fetched more than five pounds. In the same manner she remarked upon her summer hats and dresses, and her shoes, and the governess cart, and the donkey.

"I mean, Dick," she said that day in 1939, "it's not much of a tennis court, but it was once, of course. And there's a net stacked away in one of the out-houses. And a roller, and a marker. There's a lawn-mower, too, because naturally you'll need that."

"You mean, we could play on your court, Mrs Ashburton?" my sister Betty said.

"Of course I mean that, my dear. That's just what I mean. You know, before the War we really did have marvellous tennis parties at Challacombe. Everyone came."

"Oh, how lovely!" Betty was fourteen and Dick was a year older, and I was seven. Betty was fair-haired like the rest of us, but much prettier than me. She had very blue eyes and a wide, smiling mouth that boys at the grammar school were always trying to kiss, and a small nose, and freckles. Her hair was smooth and long, the colour of hay. It looked quite startling sometimes, shining in the sunlight. I used to feel proud of Betty and Dick when they came to collect me every afternoon at the primary school. Dick was to leave the grammar school in July, and on the afternoons of that warm May, as Betty and I cycled home with him, we felt sorry that he wouldn't be there next term. But Dick said he was glad. He was big, as tall as my father, and very shy. He'd begun to smoke, a habit not approved of by my father. On the way home from school we had to stop and go into a ruined cottage so that he could have a

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Woodbine. He was going to work on the farm; one day the farm would be his.

"It would be lovely to play tennis," Betty said.

"Then you must, my dear. But if you want to play this summer you'll have to get the court into trim." Mrs Ashburton smiled at Betty in a way that made her thin, elderly face seem beautiful. Then she smiled at Dick. "I was passing the tennis court the other day, Dick, and I suddenly thought of it. Now why shouldn't those children get it into trim? I thought. Why shouldn't they come and play, and bring their friends?"

"Yes," Dick said.

"Why ever don't you come over to Challacombe on Saturday? Matilda, too, of course. Come for tea, all three of you."

Mrs Ashburton smiled at each of us in turn. She nodded at us and climbed into the governess cart. "Saturday," she repeated.

"Honestly, Betty!" Dick glared crossly at my sister, as though she were responsible for the invitation. "I'm not going, you know."

He cycled off, along the narrow, dusty lane, big and red-faced and muttering. We followed him more slowly, talking about Mrs Ashburton. "Poor old thing!" Betty said, which was what people round about often said when Mrs Ashburton was mentioned, or when she was seen in her governess-cart.

THE FIRST THING I remember in all my life was my father breaking a fountain-pen. It was a large black and white pen, like tortoiseshell or marble. That was the fashion for fountain-pens then: two or three colours marbled together, green and black, blue and white, red and black-and-white. Conway Stewart, Waterman's, Blackbird. Propelling pencils were called Eversharp.

The day my father broke his pen I didn't know all that: I learnt it afterwards at Miss Pritchard's Primary. I was three the day he broke the pen. "It's just a waste of blooming money!" he shouted. He smashed the pen across his knee while my mother anxiously watched. Waste of money or not, she said, it wouldn't help matters to break the thing. She fetched him the ink and a dip-pen from a drawer of the dresser. He was still angry, but after a minute or two he began to laugh. He kissed my mother, pulling her down on to the knee he'd broken the pen over. Dick, who must have been eleven then, didn't even look up from his homework. Betty was there too, but I can't remember what she was doing.

The kitchen hasn't changed much. The big light-oak dresser is still there, with the same brass handles on its doors and drawers, and the same Wedgwood-blue dinner-set on its shelves, and the same blue cups and jugs hanging on hooks. The ceiling is low, the kitchen itself large and rectangular, with the back stairs rising from the far end of it, and a door at the bottom of them. There are doors to the pantry and the scullery, and to the passage that leads to the rest of the house, and to the yard. There's a long narrow light-oak table, with brass handles on its drawers, like the dresser ones, and oak chairs that aren't as light as all the other oak because chairs darken with use. The table itself, even now, is scrubbed once a week. I do it myself: I live alone in the farm-house now.

I remember the kitchen with oil-lamps, and the time, the day after my fifth birthday, when the men came to wire the house for electricity. The same range is still there. My mother used to talk about an Aga, and often when she took us shopping with her she'd bring us to Archers', the builder's merchants, to look at big cream-coloured Agas, After a time, Mr Gray of the Aga department didn't even bother to bustle up when he saw her coming. She'd stand there, plump and pink-cheeked, her reddish hair neat beneath the brim of her hat, touching the display models, opening the oven doors and lifting up the two big hot-plate covers. When we returned to the farm-house my father would tease her, knowing she'd been to Archers' again. She'd blush, cutting ham at tea-time or offering round salad. My father would then forget about it. "Well, I'm damned," he'd say, and he'd read out an item from the weekly paper, about some neighbouring farmer, or new County Council plans. My mother would listen and then both of them would nod. They were very good friends, even though my father teased her. She blushed like a rose, he said: he teased her to see it.

ONCE, BEFORE THE ELECTRICITY came, I had a nightmare. It was probably only a few months before, because when I came crying down to the kitchen my father kept comforting me

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with the reminder that it would soon be my fifth birthday. "You'll never cry then, Matilda," he whispered to me, cuddling me to him. "Big girls of five don't cry." I fell asleep, but it's not that that I remember now, not the fear from the nightmare going away, or the tears stopping, or my father's caressing: it's the image of my parents in the kitchen as I stumbled down the back stairs. There were two oil-lamps and the fire in the range was glowing red-hot behind its curved bars, and the heavy black kettle wasn't quite singing. My father was asleep with last Saturday's weekly paper on his knees, my mother was reading one of the books from the bookcase in the dining-room we never used, probably *The Garden of Allah,* which was her favourite. The two sheepdogs were asleep under the table, and when I opened the door at the top of the stairs they both barked because they knew that at that particular time no one should be opening that door. "Oh, now, now," my mother said, coming to me, listening to me when I said that there were cows on my bedroom wall. I remember the image of the two of them because they looked so happy sitting there, even though my mother hadn't got her Aga, even though my father was sometimes worried about the farm.

Looking back on it now, there was a lot of happiness, although perhaps not more than many families experience. Everything seems either dismal or happy in retrospect, and the happiness in the farm-house is what I think of first whenever I think now of that distant past. I remember my mother baking in the kitchen, flour all over her plump arms, and tiny beads of sweat on her forehead, because the kitchen was always hot. I remember my father's leathery skin and his smile, and the way he used to shout at the sheepdogs, and the men, Joe and Arthur, sitting on yellow stubble, drinking tea out of a bottle, on a day hay had been cut.

Our farm had once been the home-farm of Challacombe Manor, even though our farm-house was two miles away from the Manor house. There'd been servants and gardeners at Challacombe Manor then, and horses in the stables, and carriages coming and going. But the estate had fallen into rack and ruin after the First World War because Mr Ashburton hadn't been able to keep it going and in the end, in 1924, he'd taken out various mortgages. When he died, in 1929, the extent of his debts was so great that Mrs Ashburton had been obliged to let Lloyds Bank foreclose on the mortgages, which is how it came about that my father bought Challacombe Farm. It was a tragedy, people round about used to say, and the real tragedy was that Mr Ashburton had come back from the War in such a strange state that he hadn't minded about everywhere falling into rack and ruin. According to my father, Lloyds Bank owned Challacombe Manor itself and had granted Mrs Ashburton permission to live there in her lifetime. It wouldn't surprise him, my father said, if it turned out that Lloyds Bank owned Mrs Ashburton as well. "He drank himself to death," people used to say about Mr Ashburton. "She watched him and didn't have the heart to stop him." Yet before the First World War Mr Ashburton had been a different kind of man, energetic and sharp. The Challacombe estate had been a showpiece.

TO ME IN PARTICULAR Mrs Ashburton talked about her husband. She was lucky, she said, that he'd come back from the War, even if he hadn't been able to manage very well. His mind had been affected, she explained, but that was better than being dead. She told me about the men who'd died, gardeners at Challacombe Manor, and farm workers on the estate, and men she and her husband had known in the town. "I thanked God," Mrs Ashburton said, "when he came safely back here all in one piece. Everything fell to bits around us, but it didn't matter because at least he was still alive. You understand, Matilda?"

I always nodded, although I didn't really understand. And then she'd go on about the estate as it had been, and about her husband and the conversations they used to have. Sometimes she didn't address me directly. She smiled and just talked, always returning to the men who had been killed and how lucky she was that her husband had at least come back. She'd prayed, she said, that he'd come back, and every time another man from the estate or from the neighbourhood had been reported dead she'd felt that there was a better chance that her husband wouldn't die also. "By the law of averages," she explained, "some had to come back. Some men have

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always come back from wars, you convince yourself."

At this point I would always nod again, and Mrs Ashburton would say that looking back on it now she felt ashamed that she had ever applied the law of averages to the survival or death of men. Doing so was as horrible as war itself: the women who were left at home became cruel in their fear and their selfishness. Cruelty was natural in war, Mrs Ashburton said.

At the time she'd hated the Germans, and she was ashamed of that too, because the Germans were just people like other people. But when she talked about them the remains of the hatred was still in her voice, and I imagined the Germans from what she told me about them: people who ate black bread and didn't laugh much, who ate raw bacon, dour, grey and steely. She described the helmets they wore in wartime. She told me what a bayonet was, and I used to feel sick when I thought of one going into a man's stomach and being twisted in there to make sure the man would die. She told me about poison gas, and the trenches, and soldiers being buried alive. The way she spoke I knew she was repeating, word for word, the things her husband had told her, things that had maybe been the cause of his affected mind. Even her voice sounded unusual when she talked about the War, as though she was trying to imitate her husband's voice, and the terror that had been in it. He used to cry, she said, walking about the gardens, not able to stop the tears once they'd begun.

Dick didn't say anything while we rode the two miles over to Challacombe Manor that Saturday. He didn't even say anything when he suddenly dismounted and leaned his bicycle against a black gate, and climbed over the gate to have a smoke behind the hedge. If my father had come by he'd have known what was happening because he would have seen Betty and myself waiting in the lane, surrounded by the cloud of smoke that Dick always managed to make with his Woodbine. Our job was to warn him if we saw my father coming, but my father didn't come that afternoon and when Dick had finished we continued on our way.

We'd often been to tea at Challacombe Manor before. Mrs Ashburton said we were the only visitors she had because most of her friends were dead, which was something that happened, she explained, if you were eighty-one. We always had tea in the kitchen, a huge room that smelt of oil, with armchairs in it and a wireless, and an oil-stove on which Mrs Ashburton cooked, not wishing to have to keep the range going. There were oat-cakes for tea, and buttered white and brown bread, and pots of jam that Mrs Ashburton bought in the town, and a cake she bought also, usually a fruitcake. Afterwards we'd walk through the house with her, while she pointed out the places where the roof had given way, and the dry rot, and windows that were broken. She hadn't lived in most of the house since the First World War, and had lived in even less of it since her husband had died in 1929. We knew these details by heart because she'd told us so many times. In one of the out-houses there was an old motor-car with flat tyres, and the gardens were now all overgrown with grass and weeds. Rhododendrons were choked, and buddleia and kerria and hydrangeas.

The house was grey and square with two small wings, a stone Georgian house with wide stone steps leading to a front door with pillars on either side of it and a fan-light above it. The gravel expanse in front of it was grassy now, and slippery in wet weather because of moss that had accumulated. French windows opened on to it on either side of the hall door, from the rooms that had been the drawing-room and the dining-room. Lawns stretched around the house, with grass like a meadow on them now. The tennis court, which we'd never known about until Mrs Ashburton mentioned it, was hidden away, beyond the jungle of a shrubbery.

"You see?" she said. "You see, Dick?" She was wearing a long, old-fashioned dress, and a wide-brimmed white hat, and sunglasses because the afternoon was fiercely bright.

The grass on the tennis court was a yard high, as high as the rusty iron posts that were there to support the net. "Look," Mrs Ashburton said.

She led us to the stable-yard, past the out-house where the motor-car was, and into a smaller out-house. There was a lawnmower there, as rusty as the tennis posts, and a marker in the same condition, and an iron roller. Tucked into the beams above our heads was a rolled-up tennis net. "He adored

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tennis," she said. "He really loved it."

She turned and we followed her across the stable-yard, into the kitchen by the back door. She talked about her husband while she made tea.

We ate the bought fruitcake, listening to her. We'd heard it all before, but we always considered it was worth it because of the cake and the biscuits, and the buttered bread and the pots of jam. And always before we left she gave us ginger beer, and pieces of chocolate broken up on a saucer. She told us about the child which had been born to her husband and herself, six months after the beginning of the War, but which had not survived. "Everything went wrong," she said. She told us about the parties there'd been at Challacombe Manor. Champagne and strawberries and cream, and parties at Christmas with games that she described, and fancy dress.

"No reason at all," she said, "why we shouldn't have a tennis party."

Dick made a sighing sound, a soft, slight noise that Mrs Ashburton didn't hear.

"Tennis party?" Betty murmured.

"No reason, dear."

THAT MORNING Dick and Betty had had an argument. Betty had said that of course he must go to tea with Mrs Ashburton, since he'd always gone in the past. And Dick had said that Mrs Ashburton had been cunning: all these years, he said, she'd been inviting us to tea so that when the time was ripe she could get us to clean up her old tennis court. "Oh, don't be silly!" Betty had cried, and then had said that it would be the cruellest thing that Dick had ever done if he didn't go to tea with an old woman just because she'd mentioned her tennis court. I'd been cross with Dick myself, and none of us had felt very happy, because the matter of the tennis court had unattractively brought into the open the motive behind our putting up with Mrs Ashburton. I didn't like it when she called me her Matilda and put her arms around me, and said she was sure her child would have been a little girl, and that she was almost sure that she'd have called her Matilda. I didn't like it when she went on and on about the War and her husband coming back a wreck, or about the champagne and the strawberries and cream. "Poor Mrs Ashburton!" we'd always said, but it wasn't because she was poor Mrs Ashburton that we'd filled the emptiness of Saturday afternoons by cycling over to Challacombe Manor.

"Shall we go and have another look at it?" she said when we'd eaten all the food that was on the table. She smiled in her frail, almost beautiful way, and for a moment I wondered if Dick wasn't perhaps right about her cunning. She led the way back to the overgrown tennis court and we all four stood looking at it.

"It's quite all right to smoke, Dick," Mrs Ashburton said, "if you want to."

Dick laughed because he didn't know how else to react. He'd gone as red as a sunset. He kicked at the rusty iron tennis-post, and then as casually as he could he took a packet of squashed Woodbines from his pocket and began to fiddle with a box of matches. Betty poked him with her elbow, suggesting that he should offer Mrs Ashburton a cigarette.

"Would you like one, Mrs Ashburton?" Dick said, proffering the squashed packet.

"Well, you know, I think I would, Dick." She laughed and took the cigarette, saying she hadn't smoked a cigarette since 1915. Dick lit it for her. Some of the matches fell from the matchbox on to the long grass. He picked them up and replaced them, his own cigarette cocked out of the corner of his mouth. They looked rather funny, the two of them, Mrs Ashburton in her big white hat and sunglasses.

"You'd need a scythe," Dick said.

THAT WAS THE BEGINNING of the tennis party. When Dick walked over the next Saturday with a scythe, Mrs Ashburton had a packet of twenty Craven A waiting for him. He scythed the grass and got the old hand-mower going. The stubble was coarse and by the time he'd cut it short there were quite large patches of naked earth, but Betty and Mrs Ashburton said that didn't matter. The court would do as it was for this summer, but in the spring Dick said he'd put down fresh grass-seed. It rained heavily a fortnight later which was fortunate, because Dick was able to even out some of the bumps with the roller. Betty helped him, and later on she helped him to mark the court out. Mrs Ashburton and I watched, Mrs Ashburton

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holding my hand and often seeming to imagine that I was the child which hadn't been born to her.

We took to going to Challacombe Manor on Sunday mornings as well as Saturdays. There were always packets of Craven A, and ginger beer and pieces of chocolate. "Of course, it's not her property," my father said whenever anyone mentioned the tennis court, or the net that Mrs Ashburton had found rolled up in an outhouse. At dinnertime on Sundays, when we all sat around the long table in the kitchen, my father would ask Dick how he'd got on with the court. He'd then point out that the tennis court and everything that went with it was the property of Lloyds Bank. Every Sunday dinnertime we had the same: roast beef and roast potatoes and Yorkshire pudding, and carrots or brussels sprouts, according to the seasonal variation, and apple-pie and cream.

Dick didn't ever say much when my father asked him about the tennis court. "You want to be careful, lad," my father used to say, squashing roast potatoes into gravy. "Lloyds is strict, you know." My father would go on for ages, talking about Lloyds Bank or the Aga cooker my mother wanted, and you never quite knew whether he was being serious or not. He would sit there with his jacket on the back of his chair, not smiling as he ate and talked. Farmers were like that, my mother once told Betty when Betty was upset by him. Farmers were cautious and watchful and canny. He didn't at all disapprove of what Betty and Dick and Mrs Ashburton were doing with the tennis court, my mother explained, rather the opposite; but he was right when he reminded them that everything, including the house itself, was the property of Lloyds Bank.

Mrs Ashburton found six tennis racquets in presses, which were doubtless the property of Lloyds Bank also. Dick examined them and said they weren't too bad. They had an antiquated look, and the varnish had worn off the frames, but only two of them had broken strings. Even those two, so Dick said, could be played with. He and Mrs Ashburton handed the racquets to one another, blowing at the dust that had accumulated on the presses and the strings. They lit up Craven A cigarettes, and Mrs Ashburton insisted on giving Dick ten shillings to buy tennis balls with.

I sat with Mrs Ashburton watching Dick and Betty playing their first game on the court. The balls bounced in a peculiar way because in spite of all the rolling there were still hollows and bumps on the surface. The grass wasn't green. It was a brownish yellow, except for the bare patches, which were ochre-coloured. Mrs Ashburton clapped every time there was a rally, and when Dick had beaten Betty 6–1, 6–4, he taught me how to hit the ball over the net, and how to volley it and keep it going. "Marvellous, Matilda!" Mrs Ashburton cried, in her throaty voice, applauding again. "Marvellous!"

We played all that summer, every Saturday and Sunday until the end of term, and almost every evening when the holidays came. We had to play in the evenings because at the end of term Dick began to work on the farm. "Smoke your cigarettes if you want to," my father said the first morning of the holidays, at breakfast. "No point in hiding it, boy." Friends of Dick's and Betty's used to come to Challacombe Manor to play also, because that was what Mrs Ashburton wanted: Colin Gregg and Barbara Hosell and Peggy Goss and Simon Turner and Willie Beach.

Sometimes friends of mine came, and I'd show them how to do it, standing close to the net, holding the racquet handle in the middle of the shaft. Thursday, August 31st, was the day Mrs Ashburton set for the tennis party: Thursday because it was half-day in the town.

Looking back on it now, it really does seem that for years and years she'd been working towards her tennis party. She'd hung about the lanes in her governess cart waiting for us because we were the children from the farm, the nearest children to Challacombe Manor. And when Dick looked big and strong enough and Betty of an age to be interested, she'd made her bid, easing matters along with fruitcake and Craven A. I can imagine her now, on her own in that ruin of a house, watching the grass grow on her tennis court and watching Dick and Betty growing up, and dreaming of one more tennis party at Challacombe, a party like there used to be before her husband was affected in the head by the Kaiser's War.

"August 31st," Betty reminded my parents one Sunday at dinnertime. "You'll both come," she said fiercely, blushing when they laughed at her.

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"I hear Lloyds is on the rampage," my father said laboriously. "Short of funds. Calling everything in."

Dick and Betty didn't say anything. They ate their roast beef, pretending to concentrate on it.

"Course they're not," my mother said.

"They'll sell Challacombe to some building fellow, now that it's all improved with tennis courts."

"Daddy, don't be silly," Betty said, blushing even more. All three of us used to blush. We got it from my mother. If my father blushed you wouldn't notice.

"True as I'm sitting here, my dear. Nothing like tennis courts for adding a bit of style to a place."

Neither my mother nor my father had ever seen the tennis court. My father wouldn't have considered it the thing, to go walking over to Challacombe Manor to examine a tennis court. My mother was always busy, cooking and polishing brass. Neither my father nor my mother knew the rules of tennis. When we first began to play Betty used to draw a tennis court on a piece of paper and explain.

"Of course we'll come to the tennis party," my mother said quietly. "Of course, Betty."

In the middle of the tennis party, my father persisted, a man in a hard black hat from Lloyds Bank would walk on to the tennis court and tell everyone to go home.

"Oh, Giles, don't be silly now," my mother said quite sharply, and added that there was such a thing as going on too much. My father laughed and winked at her.

MRS ASHBURTON asked everyone she could think of to the tennis party, people from the farms round about and shopkeepers from the town. Dick and Betty asked their friends and their friends' parents, and I asked Belle Frye and the Gorrys and the Seatons. My mother and Betty made meringues and brandy-snaps, and fruitcakes and Victoria sponge cakes, and scones and buns and shortbread. They made sardine sandwiches and tomato sandwiches and egg sandwiches and ham sandwiches. I buttered the bread and whipped up cream, and wrapped the plates of sandwiches in damp teacloths. Dick cleared a place in the shrubbery beside the tennis court, and built a fire to boil kettles on. Milk was poured into bottles and left to keep cool in the larder. August 31st was a fine, hot day.

At dinnertime my father pretended that the truck which was to convey all the food, and all of us too, to the tennis court had a broken carburettor. He and Joe had been working on it all morning, he said, but utterly without success. No one took any notice of him.

Looking back on it, I remember, most of all, what they looked like. Mrs Ashburton thin as a rake in a long white dress and her wide-brimmed white hat and her sun-glasses. My father in his Sunday clothes, a dark blue suit, and his hair combed, and his leathery brown face shining because he'd shaved it and washed it specially. My mother had powder on her cheeks and her nose, and a touch of lipstick on her lips, although she didn't usually wear lipstick and must have borrowed Betty's. She was wearing a pale blue dress speckled with tiny white flowers. She'd spent a fortnight making it herself, specially for the occasion. Her reddish hair was soft and a little unruly, being freshly washed. My father was awkward in his Sunday suit, as he always was in it. His freckled hands lolled uneasily by his sides, or awkwardly held tea things, cup and saucer and plate. My mother blushed beneath her powder, and sometimes stammered, which she did when she was nervous.

Betty was beautiful that afternoon, in a white tennis dress that my mother had made her. Dick wore long white flannels that he'd been given by old Mr Bowe, a solicitor in the town who'd been to other tennis parties at Challacombe Manor but had no further use for white flannel trousers, being seventy-two now and too large for the trousers he'd kept for more than fifty years. My mother had made me a tennis dress, too, but I felt shy that day and didn't want to do anything except hand round plates of meringues and cake. I certainly didn't want to play, for the tennis was serious: mixed doubles, Betty and Colin Gregg against Dick and Peggy Goss, and Simon Turner and Edie Turner against Barbara Hosell and Willie Beach.

People were there whom my father said he hadn't seen for years, people who had no intention of playing tennis, any more than he had. Between them, Dick and Betty and Mrs

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Ashburton had cast a wide net, and my father's protests at the mounds of food that had been prepared met with their answer as car after car drew up, and dog-carts and pony-and-traps. Belle Frye and I passed around the plates of meringues, and people broke off in their conversations to ask us who we were. Mrs Ashburton had spread rugs on the grass around the court, and four white ornamental seats had been re-painted by Dick the week before. "Just like the old days," a man called Mr Race said, a corn merchant from the town. My mother nervously fidgeted, and I could feel her thinking that perhaps my father's laborious joke would come true, that any moment now the man from Lloyds Bank would arrive and ask people what on earth they thought they were doing, playing tennis without the Bank's permission.

But that didn't happen. The balls zipped to and fro across the net, pinging off the strings, throwing up dust towards the end of the afternoon. Voices called out in exasperation at missed shots, laughter came and went. The sun continued to shine warmly, the tennis players wiped their foreheads with increasing regularity, the rugs on the grass were in the shade. Belle Frye and I collected the balls and threw them back to the servers. Mr Bowe said that Dick had the makings of a fine player.

Mrs Ashburton walked among the guests with a packet of Craven A in her hand, talking to everyone. She kept going up to my mother and thanking her for everything she'd done. Whenever she saw me she kissed me on the hair. Mr Race said she shook hands like a duchess. The rector, Mr Throataway, laughed jollily.

At six o'clock, just as people were thinking of going, my father surprised everyone by announcing that he had a barrel of beer and a barrel of cider in the truck. I went with him and there they were, two barrels keeping cool beneath a tarpaulin, and two wooden butter-boxes full of glasses that he'd borrowed from the Heart of Oak. He drove the truck out from beneath the shade of the trees and backed it close to the tennis court. He and Dick set the barrels up and other men handed round the beer and cider, whichever anyone wanted. "Just like him," I heard a woman called Mrs Garland saying. "Now, that's just like him."

It was a quarter to ten that evening before they stopped playing tennis. You could hardly see the ball as it swayed about from racquet to racquet, looping over the net, driven out of court. My father and Mr Race went on drinking beer, and Joe and Arthur, who'd arrived after milking, stood some distance away from them, drinking beer also. Mrs Garland and my mother and Miss Sweet and Mrs Tissard made more tea, and the remains of the sandwiches and cakes were passed around by Belle Frye and myself. Joe said he reckoned it was the greatest day in Mrs Ashburton's life. "Don't go drinking that cider, now," Joe said to Belle Frye and myself.

We all sat around in the end, smacking at midges and finishing the sandwiches and the cakes. Betty and Colin Gregg had cider, and you could see from the way that Colin Gregg kept looking at Betty that he was in love with her. He was holding her left hand as they sat there, thinking that no one could see because of the gloom, but Belle Frye and I saw, all right. Just before we all went home, Belle Frye and I were playing at being ghosts round at the front of the house and we came across Betty and Colin Gregg kissing behind a rhododendron bush. They were lying on the grass with their arms tightly encircling one another, kissing and kissing as though they were never going to stop. They didn't even know Belle Frye and I were there. "Oh, Colin!" Betty kept saying. "Oh, Colin, Colin!"

WE WANTED to say good-bye to Mrs Ashburton, but we couldn't find her. We ran around looking everywhere, and then Belle Frye suggested that she was probably in the house.

"Mrs Ashburton!" I called, opening the door that led from the stable-yard to the kitchen. "Mrs Ashburton!"

It was darker in the kitchen than it was outside, almost pitch dark it was because the windows were so dirty that even in daytime it was gloomy.

"Matilda," Mrs Ashburton said. She was sitting in an armchair by the oil stove. I knew she was because that was where her voice came from. We couldn't see her.

"We came to say good-bye, Mrs Ashburton."

She told us to wait. She had a saucer of

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chocolate for us, she said, and we heard her rooting about on the table beside her. We heard the glass being removed from a lamp and then she struck a match. She lit the wick and put the glass back. In the glow of lamplight she looked exhausted. Her eyes seemed to have receded, the thinness of her face was almost sinister.

We ate our chocolate in the kitchen that smelt of oil, and Mrs Ashburton didn't speak. We said good-bye again, but she didn't say anything. She didn't even nod or shake her head. She didn't kiss me like she usually did so I went and kissed her instead. The skin of her face felt like crinkled paper.

"I've had a very happy day," she said when Belle Frye and I had reached the kitchen door. "I've had a lovely day," she said, not seeming to be talking to us but to herself. She was crying, and she smiled in the lamplight, looking straight ahead of her. "It's all over," she said. "Yet again."

We didn't know what she was talking about and presumed she meant the tennis party. "Yet again," Belle Frye repeated as we crossed the stable-yard. She spoke in a soppy voice because she was given to soppiness. "Poor Mrs Ashburton!" she said, beginning to cry herself, or pretending to. "Imagine being eighty-one," she said. "Imagine sitting in a kitchen and remembering all the other tennis parties, knowing you'd have to die soon. Race you," Belle Frye said, forgetting to be soppy any more.

Going home, Joe and Arthur sat in the back of the truck with Dick and Betty. Colin Gregg had ridden off on his bicycle, and Mr Bowe had driven away with Mrs Tissard beside him, and Mr Tissard and Miss Sweet in the dickey of his Morris Cowley. My mother, my father and myself were all squashed into the front of the truck, and there was so little room that my father couldn't change gear and had to drive all the way to the farm in first. In the back of the truck Joe and Arthur and Dick were singing, but Betty wasn't and I could imagine Betty just sitting there, staring, thinking about Colin Gregg. In Betty's bedroom there were photographs of Clark Gable, Don Ameche and Ronald Colman, and Claudette Colbert and the little Princesses. Betty was going to marry Colin, I kept saying to myself in the truck. There'd be other tennis parties and Betty would be older and would know her own mind, and Colin Gregg would ask her and she'd say yes. It was very beautiful, I thought as the truck shuddered over the uneven back avenue of Challacombe Manor. It was as beautiful as the tennis party itself, the white dresses and Betty's long hair, and everyone sitting and watching in the sunshine, and evening slowly descending. "Well, that's the end of that," my father said, and he didn't seem to be talking about the tennis party because his voice was too serious for that. He repeated a conversation he'd had with Mr Bowe and one he'd had with Mr Race, but I didn't listen because his voice was so lugubrious, not at all like it had been at the tennis party. I was huddled on my mother's knees, falling asleep. I imagined my father was talking about Lloyds Bank again, and I could hear my mother agreeing with him.

I WOKE UP when my mother was taking off my dress in my bedroom.

"What is it?" I said. "Is it because the tennis party's over? Why's everyone so sad?"

My mother shook her head, but I kept asking her because she was looking sorrowful herself and I wasn't sleepy any more. In the end she sat on the edge of my bed and said that people thought there was going to be another war against the Germans.

"Germans?" I said, thinking of the grey, steely people that Mrs Ashburton had so often told me about, the people who ate black bread.

It would be all right, my mother said, trying to smile. She told me that we'd have to make special curtains for the windows so that the German aeroplanes wouldn't see the lights at night. She told me there'd probably be sugar rationing.

I lay there listening to her, knowing now why Mrs Ashburton had said that yet again it was all over, and knowing what would happen next. I didn't want to think about it, but I couldn't help thinking about it: my father would go away, and Dick would go also, and Joe and Arthur and Betty's Colin Gregg. I would continue to attend Miss Pritchard's Primary and then I'd go on to the Grammar, and my father would be killed. A soldier would rush at my father with a bayonet and twist the bayonet in my father's stomach, and Dick would do the same to

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another soldier, and Joe and Arthur would be missing in the trenches, and Colin Gregg would be shot.

My mother kissed me and told me to say my prayers before I went to sleep. She told me to pray for the peace to continue, as she intended to do herself. There was just a chance, she said, that it might.

She went away and I lay awake, beginning to hate the Germans and not feeling ashamed of it, like Mrs Ashburton was. No German would ever have played tennis that day, I thought, no German would have stood around having tea and sandwiches and meringues, smacking away the midges when night came. The Germans weren't like that. The Germans wouldn't see the joke when my father said for all he knew Lloyds Bank owned Mrs Ashburton.

I didn't pray for the peace to continue, but prayed instead that my father and Dick might come back when the war was over. I didn't pray that Joe and Arthur and Colin Gregg should come back because that would be asking too much, because some men had to be killed, according to Mrs Ashburton's law of averages. I hadn't understood her when Mrs Ashburton had said that cruelty was natural in wartime, but I understood now. I understood her law of averages and her sitting alone in her dark kitchen, crying over the past. I cried myself, thinking of the grass growing again on her tennis court, and the cruelty that was natural.

The Black Patch

That black patch hiding the blind crater
Scooped out by Somme shrapnel used to scare
Some children. "Where's that man's eye?"
They'd ask, loud enough for him to hear,
And I'd want to hit them, almost to cry,
Thinking him hurt by such innocent chatter.

But he didn't seem to mind. Most of his life
He learned to live with lop-sided sight,
Driving a car, playing a game of tennis,
Catching up on the classics. At night,
Or when no strangers were there, he'd slip off this
Elastic-tight piratical patch, shock-safe.

Strange I was never shocked . . . but then, I suppose,
Leaning over my cot he seemed the expected
Newborn prince of the world, the true
Flaw-forgiven face of the love-accepted.
Later I glanced sidelong; and as I grew,
That sort of shyness grew that can't look close.

He never complained. Once, in the first warm sun,
The other eye snuffed, I caught him looking down
Utterly dejected—shut in, night-walled.
I thought: Wasn't it sufficient for a man
To spend his days with a half-sight of this world?

"Mind how you go" I said.
Next month he'd gone.

J. C. Hall

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The Times Literary Supplement is your kind of journal – a weekly publication devoted to the exploration of ideas and the whole world of books.

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Umberto Eco	The semiological field
Jonathan Cohen	Semiology and philosophy
Tzvetan Todorov	Semiology and literature
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T·L·S

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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The Question of Palestine

is Isaiah Friedman's study of international relations in the Middle East during the First World War. Important and newly available material from government papers together with unpublished information from the private papers of British officers and Zionist archives has enabled Dr Friedman to throw new light on the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement and whether Palestine was a 'twice promised land'. Covering the same period is Marc Ferro's masterly interpretation **The Great War 1914-1918.** The main focus of his interest is on forces and movements rather than battles and events and he shows why men went to war and why the world which they found when the war ended was totally transformed.

In **Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences** Professor Ernest Gellner writes brilliantly on key conceptual issues in the social sciences. He is particularly concerned with such problems as the relationship of nature and culture, the relevance of concepts drawn from within a given society to its understanding and the relation of theory to time.

A new style of family life has emerged in recent years: its basis is not equality between husbands and wives but something approaching symmetry—increasingly wives work outside the home and husbands inside it. But, as the authors of **The Symmetrical Family** show, the new family is itself under increasing pressure. The authors combine evidence about the family of the past with information from a sociological survey in the London region and use both as the basis for a speculative discussion about the future.

The publication of the selected Letters of **C. G. Jung** is an event of major importance. Over many years Jung used the medium of letters to communicate his ideas to others and to clarify the interpretation of his work, quite apart from answering people who approached him with genuine problems of their own and corresponding with friends and colleagues. Volume I contains some 550 letters and covers the years 1906–1950. Volume II to be published later will cover the period 1951–1961.

The Question of Palestine 1914-1918
British-Jewish-Arab Relations
ISAIAH FRIEDMAN £5·00

The Great War 1914-1918
MARC FERRO £3·50 paper £1·60

Cause and Meaning in the Social Sciences
ERNEST GELLNER
Edited with a Preface by L. C. Jarvie and Joseph Agassi £3·25

The Symmetrical Family
A Study of Work and Leisure in the London Region
MICHAEL YOUNG and PETER WILLMOTT
Institute of Community Studies £4·50

C. G. Jung Letters
Volume I 1906-1950
selected and edited by Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffe
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R. H. S. Crossman

Are the Political Pollsters Doing a Serious Job?

Psephology between Social Science & Journalism

IN MY EXPERIENCE politicians suffer from a mild kind of schizophrenia about opinion polls. Of course they are omnivorously read at Westminster as well as round the corner in the two Party Headquarters in Smith Square. Yet in his public statements about them, the politician—especially when the polls have made an adverse prediction—tends to express a lordly disdain for their accuracy; and if the election results confirm their predictions, he begins to talk darkly about the malignant influence the pollsters exert on the mind of the electorate. All this is to be expected. What however has surprised and disconcerted me more than once has been the discovery of how little is known—even in the highest circles—about the actual methods employed in polling and the degree of reliability which can reasonably be expected of their predictions.

Until now there has been a good excuse for this ignorance. Although quite a literature has grown up on market research and public surveys generally, no single book was available which concentrated on the narrower topic of the political opinion polls which provide the electoral surveys appearing regularly in the British Press. They are five in number.

The first, "Gallup", was imported from the United States and set up under the title *The British Institute of Public Opinion* in 1937 when it became attached to the *News Chronicle* under Sir Gerald Barry. (BIPO won its spurs at the Fulham by-election in 1938, and confounded Sir Winston Churchill in 1945 by almost alone forecasting the overwhelming Labour victory at the Polls). In 1951 *Research Services Ltd.* was established as a subsidiary of an advertising agency, *The London Press Exchange*, whose market research was under the direction of that formidable political pollster, Dr Mark Abrams. (In the old days it published its results in the *Daily Graphic* but now has no regular outlet in Fleet Street though Dr Abrams does a lot of special survey work for the Labour Party as well as for such organisations as PEP.) In 1957 *National Opinion Polls* was established as an affiliate of Associated Newspapers Ltd. and has since then worked for the *Daily Mail.*

More recently three new polls have been established. *The Opinion Research Centre* was founded in 1965 with the encouragement of the Conservative Central Office and began publishing in 1967 in the *Evening Standard* and occasionally in the *Sunday Times.* In 1968 McCann Erickson Advertising which is owned by Interpublic founded Marplan which works for *The Times* and for Independent Television News. Two years later the *Louis Harris Poll,* well-known in the United States, established a British branch which is jointly owned by ORC, Beaverbrook Newspapers and its American parent company, *Louis Harris Associates.* All these organisations do extensive commercial market research (in the case of Gallup, NOP, and Marplan it amounts to 90% of turnover) as well as surveys for academic institutions, Government departments, and other public corporations.

It is upon the work of these five organisations that the joint authors of *Political Opinion Polls*[1] have concentrated their attention. Their report on the industry to which they belong is written not only with clarity but with a candour which charmed me out of my initial scepticism when I read on the dust cover that Mr Teer is Managing

[1] Political Opinion Polls. By F. TEER and J. D. SPENCE. Hutchinson, £3.50, paper £2.00.

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Director of Research Surveys and Mr Spence an employee of NOP. This is very much an inside job but, unlike most such productions, it has been composed not for an inside audience but for the kind of general reader who expects and so rarely gets an answer to all his questions.

THE FIRST VIRTUE of this book is that the authors have the honesty to admit that the political opinion polls for which they work must be judged as members not of the academic fraternity but of the Fleet Street gang.

> Unlike academic enquiries whose objectives will be to reach a basic understanding of the mainsprings of opinion, the pollster's function is simply to report that opinion as succinctly as possible. He is seldom concerned with its depth, intensity or origin because his work is not undertaken to help decide what action should be taken but merely to report the existing opinion for publication as a news story.

In explaining why the questioning is so superficial they are equally frank:

> The end use of the poll primarily affects the depth of questioning on any topic. The newspapers' needs and the consequent limitation on space devoted to opinion poll reporting mean that any issue examined by the polls will be dealt with at a relatively superficial level. The analysis will also be severely limited to the main aspects of the findings for the same reason. The requirements of the client will also govern the content of an opinion poll questionnaire. The topics examined by a poll will in general be those which the client newspaper considers to be of editorial interest. . . .

I had always assumed that the pollsters were serious researchers doing a serious job, and that if their reports in the papers which financed them seemed so superficial the blame would rest on the journalists who subbed them for publication. Now I know better. The questions in these five political opinion polls are decided by the editors of the papers which finance them, and the reports are composed expressly to provide the right kind of news stories for the papers in which they appear.

On the issue of reliability in predicting election results Mr Teer and Mr Spence are even more revealing. They are careful first to list the factors outside their control which make unreliability inevitable. The postal vote, which provides the Tories with a substantial but unquantifiable advantage, accounted in 1970 for 2% of all votes cast; and since the pollster has no way of assessing its size or distribution he cannot revise his survey findings to take it into account. An even more important factor of unreliability is the rapidity with which the electoral register becomes obsolete. One per cent of the registered electorate is disenfranchised *each month* by death or change of address. This means that in an election taking place in June 6% of the registered electorate cannot vote and the maximum turnout is therefore 94%. At the end of the register's life the maximum poll has sunk to 84%. It is only possible to guess how these absentees would have voted if they had had the chance.

These two factors are out of the pollster's control. What is within his control is the method of sampling, and the authors reveal that in order to save money their employers insist on them using devices which substantially increase the sampling error. The most important of these is "clustering." In order to concentrate the interviews within the smallest possible area and so cheapen the costs the names of those to be interviewed are not randomly picked from the register but concentrated in a relatively small area. This increases the inevitable sampling error by between 1½% and 1¾%.

I HAVE LEFT THE MAIN FACTOR of unreliability to the last. The pollster's predictions are based on the assumption of a 100% turn-out. But the total poll in Britain is far below that figure and the prediction, therefore, will only be accurate if the proportion of Conservative, Liberal, and Labour abstentions is exactly the same as the proportion of votes cast. There is no reason to think this is the case. Indeed there is some evidence to show that intending Tory voters carry out their intention on polling day with a great deal more discipline than intending Labour voters.

In some of the most interesting pages of their study our authors tell us of the efforts made by the pollsters to deal with this problem. At the very least it seemed essential to test the reliability of the statements of intention to vote which are given to interviewers. At the Hove by-election in 1965 NOP went so far as to interview a sample of 192 electors in one polling district, and then to send interviewers to the polling station to check which of them actually turned out to vote. The result was illuminating. Of those who said they were *"quite certain"*, 78 voted and 22 abstained. Of those who said they were *"very likely to vote"*, 60 voted and 40 abstained. If the voters had been visited at home and asked by the interviewer whether they had actually voted, the figures of those claiming to have voted would have been substantially higher.

No wonder Mr Teer and Mr Spence conclude

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> The pollsters have so far been unsuccessful in precisely calibrating [sic] these turnout measures to actual behaviour. . . . What the pollster must do is to find a way of precisely assessing the probability of voting related to each statement for each election, a probability which depends on how much the voter cares about the result, the popularity or otherwise of government and maybe other extraneous factors such as weather, distance from polling station, car ownership, age, etc.

This is one of the few passages where Teer and Spence funk frankness and fudge the argument. The truth is that since no one can know in advance the actual turn-out, the pollsters must reach their final conclusions about the percentages voting for each party by inspired guesswork. All they have achieved by their elaborate and highly-advertised sampling is to narrow the limits within which the guess has to be made.

THERE ARE ANY NUMBER of interesting and important facets of politics which can be illuminated by public opinion surveys. The authors devote a useful chapter to the work done by private opinion polls mostly under contract to one of the political parties. A poll which is not required to guess the election result can graph the movement of public opinion on an important issue over a period of years, as well as indicating to a politician preparing his Party programme what obstacles he will confront in trying to sell it to public opinion. But the newspaper proprietors who finance the pollsters are not interested in serious political analysis. What they require is hard, easily-intelligible prediction which can be tested by results. In terms of Fleet Street news-value the pollster is really a high-class tipster, valued not for anything interesting he has to discover but for his success in backing winners. I must admit that until I accepted Messrs Teer and Spence as my joint tutors in this subject, I had harboured the illusion that the agencies they worked for should be taken far more seriously. Now I know better.

And knowing better I can now explain one or two unresolved problems. Why, for example, do the polls regularly tell us about the popularity ratings of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and even seek to break their popularity down into separate factors by listing "the essential qualities of leadership"? Once one remembers that they are paid for by Fleet Street the answer is obvious. Personalities make news and running Mr Heath against Mr Wilson in a popularity steeplechase is the kind of sport the readers enjoy. I have also been puzzled in the past by the small attention that pollsters give to the results of by-elections and local elections as indicators of general election prospects. I now realise that once they have won or lost the contest for predicting the result the by-election ceases to exist for the pollsters since their own polling is the only thing which interests them. As Teer and Spence so aptly put it: "Without the formalising process which the polls undertake, the public opinion which they measure would not exist." In fact almost the very reverse is true. It is the result of the polls which is a highly contrived fiction whereas the by-election vote is a microcosm of the general election vote—a real hard fact.

MY FINAL EXAMPLE of a neglected topic is the importance of the individual Member of Parliament. Our authors apparently feel slightly troubled when they are asked why they only stage polls on national public opinion and national party leaders and totally disregard the individual MP. Their way out of this difficulty is to state:

> Careful analysis of General Election results since 1945 has suggested that the "personal" vote is a fiction, save in one or two very rare circumstances (for instance Mr Powell in Wolverhampton South-West and S. O. Davies in Merthyr Tydfil in 1970).

Even that pioneer of prophecy, David Butler, who shares their view that individual MPs count for little in general elections, would not claim as much as this. As far as I know there has not been any careful analysis of the individual results since 1945. Nor has there been any special investigation which would provide hard evidence on which to calculate how many votes an individual candidate wins by force of personality. All that happened was that many years ago, when questioned by David Butler, George Wigg drew a bow at a venture and gaily remarked "not more than 900", a judgment which duly appeared in Mr Butler's next volume and within 12 months was accepted as hard evidence. Pollsters, whether academic or commercial, don't like the idea that an MP's personality can count in a general election because if it were true it would require some modification of the theory of national swings upon which this pseudo-science is based. But as Messrs Teer and Spence remind us so often, this is not something for which they bear the blame since the polls they run are not a scientific survey but merely "yet another aspect of journalism."

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Joachim Fest

On Remembering Adolf Hitler

HISTORY APPORTIONS GREATNESS according to rules that are hard to fathom and indeed seem arbitrary. Its verdict takes no account of public happiness or unhappiness, years of war or years of peace. Fame and success may give rise to greatness, but so may disgrace and failure. History evaluates without scruple, and moral categories have no standing in its eyes. One factor at work in the attribution of historical greatness—an amazed or horrified sense of fascination, even in the aftermath—may originate precisely in the reprehensible character of the figure in question. Any consideration of the personality and career of Adolf Hitler will for a long time to come be impossible without a feeling of moral outrage. Nevertheless he possesses historical greatness.

This greatness does not derive merely from the effects which he produced, not merely from the disasters he brought about and the incredible acceleration which he imparted to the course of events, so that the present state of affairs in the world is unthinkable without him. The fact is that the things which happened in his time are inconceivable without him, in every respect and in every detail. Any definition of National Socialism (or the system of government based upon it) that omits the name of Hitler misses the heart of the matter. To an extent previously unknown in history, from his wretched beginnings in low dives and back rooms, he drew everything out of himself and combined everything in himself: he was his own teacher, the organiser of a party and the creator of its ideology, a tactician and a demagogic "saviour of the people", a leader, a statesman, and for a decade the dynamic centre of the world. He contradicted the maxim that all revolutions devour their children; for, as H. R. Trevor-Roper has said, he was

> the Rousseau, the Mirabeau, the Robespierre, the Napoleon of his revolution; its Marx, its Lenin, its Trotsky, its Stalin. In character and mentality he may have been far inferior to most of these men, but at least he did what none of them did: he controlled his revolution through all its stages even in defeat. This alone argues a remarkable understanding of the forces with which he conjured. He may have been a hideous historical phenomenon, but at least he was an important historical phenomenon. . . .[1]

The Weimar Republic might have been a failure even without the intervention of Hitler. Even without him the 1930s would probably have revealed conflicts of interest and ideology among the European nations; and it is also conceivable that these unresolved conflicts might have plunged Europe and the world into war during the 1940s. But the particular conditions under which the events took place, their excesses, their barbarity and pathological consistency, are indissolubly linked with the personality of Adolf Hitler.

NEVERTHELESS, THIS PERSONALITY remains curiously flat, inexpressive, abstract. In a certain sense Bismarck or Napoleon, and even Cromwell or Caesar, present a more personal image and are more familiar to the observer than he. The question of whether he really existed or whether he was perhaps merely the "condition of Germany", *der deutsche Zustand* as a contemporary definition described him, is more than the witticism it was intended to be. The reports and recollections that have come down to us from his immediate environment do not render him any more tangible. He moves with the impersonality of a mask through the scenery which he nevertheless dominates. Nor can his former entourage relate a single word, a single gesture that shows him relaxed, natural and free from the rigid, convulsive straining after the image of the great leader.

[1] Introduction to *Le testament politique de Hitler*, edited by François Genoud (Paris, 1959), p. 12ff.; *The Testament of Adolf Hitler* (London, 1961).

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"There was something indescribably remote about him throughout his whole life," commented Ribbentrop later; and we seek in vain through his biography for a single disinterested relationship. He was without friends; he rarely smiled; we find no trace of any act of kindness or magnanimity, and revealingly there are no anecdotes about him. In order to live up to the monumental proportions of the image he had formed for himself of his role and importance, he forced himself, at the cost of a psychological self-mutilation, into the pose of a statue, obsessed by the fear of showing himself without the strained concentration of a statesman. A report from his intimate circle reveals that he always strenuously avoided being surprised playing with one of his dogs. The moment he knew he was being watched, he drove the animal away.[2]

Faith & Frenzy

THE PICTURE WE HAVE OF HIM shows him constantly in the presence of people. Solitude agonised him, he was almost never alone; and yet the area of isolation around him grew unceasingly. It has been calculated that in the course of his life he appeared before about thirty-five million people; and yet this life is almost mysteriously devoid of human contacts.

This individual emptiness and poverty of expression is the problem with which Hitler's biographers have to contend.[3] Just as there is nothing to be said about him to his personal credit, so there is almost nothing to be said to his personal discredit. He teaches us something which, until his appearance, was unknown to history on this level: that utter individual nullity or mediocrity may be combined in one man with exceptional political virtuosity. Looked at from this point of view, the great and enduring endeavour of his life seems to have been, by bringing about unexampled events, even ultimate disaster, to deceive the world as to his own lack of personality and to acquire profile.

It may be connected with the curiously fictitious, unreal nature of his being that many politicians of the Right and many historians of the Left were misled into seeing in him the instrument of alien purposes. But important as the Bavarian upper-crust and the *Reichswehr*, a section of industry and the big land-owners became to him and his rise to power—he never allowed himself to be used by them or any other forces. He alone decided on the nature and duration of the tactical alliances he formed. He proved superior to all his partners and rivals in the struggle for power, because in his thought and actions he was free from all preconceptions. He was no one's tool, but himself coolly subordinated everything—people, ideas, forces, opponents, principles—to the goal that was the obsession of his life: the primitive accumulation of personal power.

BUT, DESPITE ALL HIS UNERRING political adroitness, Hitler would never have achieved such an apparently magical power over people's minds had he not, in an exemplary manner, represented the mood of his neurotically exasperated age. The crisis complexes—the feelings of malaise and the *Wunschvorstellungen* or the wish-fantasies of the masses—were perfectly combined in him. Before his speaker's platform the masses encountered, celebrated, and idolised themselves. The feminine streak that characterised him and lent a curiously obscene effluvium to the whole movement was betrayed not least in an excessively sensitive receptivity, which allowed him to register and articulate the most secret emotions of his audience of the moment. He proved the truth of Jacob Burckhardt's statement that at times history likes to embody itself in one man, to whom the world henceforth belongs. The man and his age combine in a great, mysterious equation.

THE PRECONDITIONS that made his rise to power possible had their own specific basis that goes beyond the purely biographical facts. As a boy, Hitler stated, "I often thought angrily that I had embarked too late upon my earthly pilgrimage" and "I regarded the period of 'peace and quiet (*Ruhe und ordnung*)' that lay ahead as an undeserved meanness on the part of Fate."[4] Moreover he made his appearance against a background of the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, the First World War and the crisis-riven post-War period.

Beyond this, the movement that he developed drew into itself complex motivations and states

[2] Albert Zoller, *Hitler privat* (Düsseldorf, 1949), p. 127.

[3] The most recent are: Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler* (Praeger, New York; Cape, London); Colin Cross, *Adolf Hitler* (Putnam, New York; Hodder & Stoughton, London); Werner Maser, *Adolf Hitler* (Munich, 1971; Allen Lane, London, 1973). See the critique by Professor K. D. Bracher in ENCOUNTER, (September 1972), pp. 75-77.

[4] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (37th edition), p. 173.

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of mind whose causes were to be found in a Europe-wide process of disintegration, the origins of which lay far in the past. In the failure of a whole order, he, who had so often failed himself, had his hour. In an inimitable manner he was able to exploit the millionfold feelings of *Lebensangst* to conjure up a picture of the enemy for all the aimlessly proliferating hate and to offer himself as the object and idol of pseudo-religious longings. The submissiveness of uprooted masses ready for anything was directed towards him, as he demanded from them in ingeniously whipped-up frenzies those professions of faith in violence that revealed the pre-totalitarian character of the period.

The Actor & the Dreamer

HITLER'S STRENGTH lay in his ability to ignore reality whenever it contradicted his fantasies. When with boastful cynicism he called himself, after a successful stroke of foreign policy, "Europe's greatest actor (*den grössten Schauspieler Europas*)", this contained more than a reference to his power of dissimulation. He needed the self-bewitchment, the brilliant moves as head of state, the spectacular effects.

By nature, he was a theatrical character, only himself in the world of illusion where, before a breathless audience, making sweeping gestures in the glittering light, he declaimed the great scenes that found in him a great interpreter. Perhaps the heroes of Richard Wagner's operas had made a deeper impression on him than is generally supposed; and he was always seeking the role of the all-conquering hero that enabled him to appear to fanfares of trumpets and lightning flashes from the wings. The melodramatic analogies which, again and again, led him to a remarkable confusion of appearance and reality so captured his imagination that he made his exit in the fiery glow of blazing petrol.

Even as the Linz secondary schoolboy who failed to make the grade, Hitler already possessed the ability to escape from every difficulty, every test, into a dream world that he had constructed for himself beside and above the real world. Within this dream world the boy who (in the words of the friend of his youth, August Kubizek) had quarrelled at an early age with the whole world, brooded over his hatred and his wounded self-confidence. Here he celebrated his lonely triumphs over unarmed foes, and from here he hurled his immoderate condemnations at a malevolent world. His family's comfortable economic circumstances enabled him to adopt the life-style of a *Taugenicht*—a good-for-nothing. He sat idly around, devoting himself in a dilettante manner to ever-changing interests, and cultivating the special consciousness of the genius. He rejected any training for what he contemptuously called a *Brotberuf*, a "bread-and-butter trade". Far into the night the 18-year-old pondered feverishly over vast projects with which he furnished his self-created world of fantasy: the rebuilding of the Vienna Hofburg; the re-planning of the town of Linz; visits to concert halls and theatres designed by himself (where, convulsed with happiness, he attended performances of operas and plays written by himself, which, although he had no knowledge of composition and had difficulty over spelling, he had already begun to dream and plan). For a few euphoric weeks the acquisition of a lottery ticket transported him to that unreal world that was the true ground of his existence, a world of splendoured liberty which he constructed for himself with a mansion, gorgeous furnishings, and a cultured lady of the house—until the day of the draw shattered the dream which he had regarded as a certainty and in an uncontrolled outburst of rage Hitler condemned lock, stock and barrel not merely his own bad luck but, with characteristic exaggeration, human credulity, the state lottery, and finally the fraudulent state itself.

Whenever reality harshly and abruptly opposed him and shattered the illusory worlds in which he lived in ecstatic self-contemplation, he invariably reacted with an outburst of universal anathema, of total execration—except that later he had at his disposal a power apparatus that executed his verdicts with mechanical impassivity and punished reality for resisting his fantasies.

FROM THE OUTSET Hitler's behaviour and appearance were marked by a touch of insanity, an element of extravagant exaltation, the cause of which lay in this disturbed relationship to reality. Not without reason, this relationship became visibly more arrogant and provocative after too many of his obviously absurd decisions had led people to warn him of the dangers and to counsel sense and moderation—only to be proved utterly wrong. He undoubtedly owed much of his success to his tendency to demand the impossible, disregarding the calculable factors,

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the relative strength of the forces involved, and the probabilities as to the outcome, which for a while dumbfounded those of his opponents who depended upon rational evaluation.

However, he pursued his emotionally-determined chimeras, fixated by early aggressions, with the highest degree of cold concentration and sobriety as to method. The wildly exaggerated nature of his goals did not diminish the acuity of his tactical calculation; and it is precisely this contradictory mixture of eccentric fantasy and logicality, of confused thinking, hysterical day-dreams and "icy coldness (*Eiseskälte*)", to use one of Hitler's favourite expressions, that characterises his peculiar relationship to reality.

NEVERTHELESS HIS DENIAL of reality was not only Hitler's strength, but also his weakness and one of the causes of his failure. It was the cause of his rise from nothing, the series of political triumphs and no doubt also some of his military successes. But as the tide began to turn, his contempt for reality aggravated every setback and the effects of every defeat.

What had once looked like audacity and tactical brilliance now proved to be the desperate recklessness of a gambler. He never faced the reality of disaster, the death and destruction. His refusal to visit the cities that had been destroyed, his habit towards the end of the War of driving through the country at night with curtains drawn, the operations with ghost armies, the absurd certainty of victory imposed by command upon his immediate entourage, and his final withdrawal to the *Tiefbunker* beneath the Reich Chancellery, where, in a shelter protected by twenty-five feet of reinforced concrete, he once more created a world of fantasy quite apart from all reality—what was all this but an attempt to escape from the unforgotten shock he had experienced once before, to delay the day on which the lot was drawn? He had once again gambled for the big prize, world power or collapse (*Weltmacht oder Untergang*), and certain of success he had begun to distribute continents, to carry out "spring cleanings of the German blood", to found empires—and he had lost.

HITLER'S TENDENCY to deny reality did not merely correspond exactly to the psychological situation of the German people as a whole at the end of the First World War, but also sprang from similar causes. Both the failed schoolboy who thought himself a genius, the rejected candidate for the Academy of Fine Arts, as well as the nation which in Autumn 1918 had allowed itself to be led on by expansionist dreams far into Poland and into Lorraine, had suffered the experience of the sudden dissipation of a sense of superiority. Both had seen themselves humiliated, deceived, socially downgraded; and, embittered, had set out in search of objects for their blame and hate. In both cases, suffering at the hands of a reality that was so disappointing by comparison with the picture offered by their day-dreams produced a growing inability to cope with the demands of an independent existence.

This correspondence between his own psychological situation and that of society as a whole provided the take-off point for Hitler's rise to power. He shared with his age the same morbidly overwrought, unventilated, neurotic basic make-up, and his age was electrified to recognise itself in him. In its mingling of frenzy, back-street satanism, and curiously glutinous vulgarity his charisma was irresistible. From the alcoholic haze of Bavarian beer-cellars he talked his way through well-organised mass deliriums to the position of a saviour of the people, and in meetings which (in the words of the poet René Schickele) were like public lust murders, he carried the masses with him into a state of "forward-striving hysteria." Using every demagogic means to play on the emotions, he raised himself to pseudo-religious heights where he appeared to be taking all oppression upon himself. Finally, he came to be regarded by a growing following as the redeemer, chosen to rescue Germany from her distress.

Legend & Reality

HITLER POSSESSED one of the prerequisites of a charismatic figure: an alien origin wrapped in obscurity. This made possible the legend—not entirely obliterated even now—of a brilliant precocity in poor circumstances, blows of fate, an orphaned childhood, and the hard bread of exile.

Hitler's origins are still obscure, for even the most recent research has failed to remove all doubt. The only certainty is that Adolf Hitler himself did not possess and could not produce the documentary evidence of Aryan ancestry which he made a matter of life-and-death for millions of others. The riddle of his grandfather's identity has led to somewhat wild statements, though they were made by members of his most

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intimate entourage, that Hitler was partially Jewish and that his anti-Semitism is to be explained as the morbid hatred of his own image.[5] True though it is that Hitler persecuted above all those in whom at least a shadow of his own features was to be seen, and that he clearly saw and hated a resemblance to himself in the picture he painted of the "universal enemy", there is not enough evidence to trace this back to his own ancestry. All that can be established for certain regarding his somewhat obscure family background is that his father Alois was the illegitimate son of the maid Maria Anna Schicklgruber. Not until he was forty, and about ten years before a son was born in his third marriage who received the name of Adolf, did the carelessness of a village priest make it possible for him to exchange the name Schicklgruber for that of his "foster father".

From an early stage this son's life seems curiously unbalanced and unstable. At times marked by hypertension and restless effort, it relapses at other times into leaden or merely apathetic inactivity. All subsequent observers have noted prolonged phases of time-wasting, a striking tendency to a lax and disorganised mode of life. This tendency already curtailed the achievements of the schoolboy and his school reports show that Hitler's apparently credible claims to an exceptional understanding of historical processes are nothing but part of his own self-created legend. Twice in the course of his five years of schooling he failed to make the grade and had to sit examinations over again, before he ceased to attend school altogether out of laziness and an unwillingness to persevere with something he did not like. As he revealingly confesses in *Mein Kampf*, an illness came to his aid.

This was evidently the first occasion on which, in a matter of importance, he successfully imposed his will with the aid of an hysterical reaction. There are plenty of descriptions from later periods of his tearful entreaties, emotional scenes, and hoarse supplications—episodes that accompany the well-attested course of his life, from the forming of the Party to the insane world of the *Führer*'s underground shelter, and prove that he constantly sought to utilise the power of the apparently inferior, demonstrations of weakness and dependency, as an instrument of psychological domination. After the early death of his father in 1903, there was really no further obstacle to the imposition of his will, certainly not from his indulgent mother who, for the next few years, used up the family fortune in ensuring for her son the life of a teen-age idler without work or organised training, but filled with amusements and with grandiose and incompetent projects.

The total freedom from inhibitions with which Hitler's temperament was able to develop during those years soon led to the emergence of those traits which marked the profile of the future "*Führer*": above all, the concentrated stubbornness in the pursuit of personal aims; a brutal will to dominate; a self-centred, dogmatic arrogance and lack of contact with others, coupled with a lachrymose self-pity. Not without some concern, the friend of his youth August Kubizek (who nevertheless seeks in his memoirs to glorify his protagonist) notes certain compulsive elements that began to develop before his eyes with no educational influence to counter them: the 18-year-old's sudden attacks of unrestrained rage or desperation, the multiplicity and intensity of his aggressions, as well as his limitless capacity for hate.

These still diffuse hostilities and tensions took on their special colouring and concrete shape during Hitler's first stay in Vienna. They grew far stronger after his mother's death in December 1907, when he moved to the capital and a life of total freedom from constraint. To be sure, he was not driven to Vienna, as the legend would have us believe, "by want and by harsh reality"; rather, he was able for a long time to rely upon a considerable inheritance, which he succeeded in increasing to a very fair monthly income by a fraudulently obtained pension. But after twice failing to gain admission to the Academy of Fine Arts, and dazzled by the splendour and wealth of the capital, his still aimless hate began to concentrate itself upon the bourgeois order by which he felt rejected.

THE SENSE OF HIS OWN POWERLESSNESS experienced by the outcast from society, who was going steadily downhill, demanded explanations that would satisfy his wounded self-esteem. For a time, as we know, he had recourse to the feelings of superiority of the unrecognised genius. But then the need for self-respect drove the aimless wanderer to establish the first, still hesitant links between his plight and the vague political ideas he had picked up on the way from companions

[5] Hans Frank, *Im Angesicht des Galgens* (Neuhaus, 1955), p. 320ff.

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in the men's hostel, trashy pamphlets, and chance reading. Without meaning to, he has described in *Mein Kampf* how his emotional attitudes gradually began to become political and assume the outlines of an increasingly coherent view of the world. The curiously penetrating effluvium that continued to characterise this world-view, despite any influences from without, was indelibly stamped by its origins and earliest motivations: a mixture of the vulgar Machiavellianism of the men's hostel and the hate-complex of an unhappy, humiliated semi-genius.

The Ideologist & Propagandist

HITLER'S IDEOLOGY was and remained devoid of all originality. It was an amalgam of Darwinian, racist, and Pan-German concepts with certain emotional elements based on hostility to civilisation. Among them flitted the shadow of the German Romantics and of Wagner, Nietzsche, and Paul de Lagarde. To these, a reflection of the mood of the times, were added nationalist, restorational, and socialist ideas. There is not one of the theories current at the time, including the abstruse ideas of certain "life-reformers" and "neo-pagans", that failed to leave some mark, however fleeting, on National Socialist ideology. "We gathered our ideas from all the bushes alongside our life's road", Hitler once declared, "and we no longer know where they come from."[6]

In fact his early *Weltbild* mirrors pretty closely the ideological repertoire of the Viennese petty bourgeoisie of the turn of the century. The theories and slogans which he mixed together to form his own world-view were drawn from the catchwords of Georg Ritter von Schönerer's Pan-German Movement, the demagogy of Vienna's chief burgomaster, Adolf Lueger (whom he so much admired), and the hackneyed racial philosophy of a renegade monk named Adolf Lanz. Anti-Semitism and anti-socialism were standard attitudes in the so-called *gute Gesellschaft*, whose prejudices Hitler, with the outlook of the lower middle-class man who has sunk into the proletariat but considers himself something better, adopted for himself.

The nucleus of the National Socialist world-view which, notwithstanding some later additions, is made up of these catchwords, has often been described. According to it, history is the story of racial struggles. The blond race as the "loftiest image and likeness of God" is called upon to rule the world. But it is increasingly menaced by the inferior mixed races, particularly the Jews, who, as the great counter-force, threaten to subjugate and destroy the world. The Press, prostitution and syphilis, as well as Marxism, parliamentarianism, the big department stores, and cosmopolitanism, and every concept that was or could be linked in the public mind with a vague sense of unease, were only camouflaged forms of a world conspiracy behind which hid the evil, hate-filled figure of the Eternal Jew out to vitiate the purity of German blood. War and liquidation on the one hand, and preservation of the costly chalice of Nordic blood by means of breeding and racial hygiene on the other, were not merely an historic task but, as a fulfilment of the plan of Creation, possessed the sacred quality of a divine commandment. "In standing guard against the Jew I am defending the handiwork of the Lord."[7]

THIS FUNDAMENTALIST IDEA was shot through with nationalist, imperialist, and pseudo-socialist elements. Its horrifying primitiveness, the insouciance with which it offended against reason and simple observation, in no way detracted from it in the eyes of the masses. The great majority, of course, never absorbed the substance of the National Socialist world-view, apart from a few emotion-laden slogans, catchwords, and mysterious-sounding verbal symbols. In fact National Socialism derived its integrating effect less from an ideological system than from the psycho-technical virtuosity with which it gave direction to feelings of protest and malaise dictated by the day and the hour. Its originality lay not in the ideas, which always displayed a blatantly fictitious character, but in the skill with which it set scenes and manipulated the masses. Forests of banners, shouts of *Heil*, marching columns, fanfares of trumpets, cones of searchlights, the magic of fires at night—with a wealth of ingenious inventions it kept the public in a constant state of emotional exaltation. The relationship between ideology and propaganda is nowhere more clearly expressed than in the repeated statement by contemporary witnesses that National Socialism was something which was "experienced (*erlebt*)"—a word that immediately excludes any intellectual and critical approach.

[6] Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche mit Hitler*, (Zürich, 1940) p. 41 (English translation, *Hitler Speaks*, London, 1939).
[7] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 70.

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Looking back, Hitler himself claimed an extensive political education, stating of his Vienna days: "I read a great deal and I pondered deeply over what I read." But he casts doubt on this assertion by his own comments on the "art of reading", which was nothing else than the search for neat phrases that would support his own prejudices.[8] It would be more correct to seek the really effective impressions of those years not on the intellectual plane, but on that of political tactics. Those pages of *Mein Kampf* that are not devoted to his political awakening display an extreme poverty of theoretical thought and do not contain even an echo of that critical struggle with the ideas of the time in which he claimed to have engaged. On the other hand, questions relating to the organisation of ideas, their use in mobilising the masses, aroused his almost greedy interest and first flashes of insight.

IDEAS, in fact, left him profoundly indifferent. They never meant anything to him but material with which to incite and conquer the masses. In keeping with his total disregard of all spiritual forces, contradictions and inconsistencies in the National Socialist ideology left him unmoved, so long as they did not impede that success which he acknowledged as "the sole arbiter of right and wrong." "Any idea, even the best", he stated in defence of his utilitarian thinking, with apodictic imprecision in his style, "becomes a danger when it imagines it is an end in itself, whereas in reality it represents merely a means to such."[9] Without a thought, he jettisoned so-called "granite" principles, as soon as they stood in the way of tactical considerations. There was no idea, no article of faith he would not have been willing at any time to proclaim or abandon for the sake of gaining power—determined, as he stated with self-admiring cynicism to his intimate circle, "to swear six false oaths a day." What looked like fanaticism for a cause was almost always merely vehemence in method or purposeless rhetorical excess.

This can be demonstrated in respect of every supposed ideological demand. Thus, for example, Hitler's behaviour over the question of the South Tyrol was a disavowal of his nationalist protestations, the alliance with Japan contradicted his racial policy, and his tactics with regard to the entrepreneurial class ran counter to his politico-economic programme. Hitler never felt under any obligation either to his early articles of faith or (in spite of the Party's name) to its socialist ideas which were in any case very vaguely formulated. In no way did he see the Worker as the revolutionary type of the future; he was merely the most backward, most limited, most ready to resort to force and for that very reason the most malleable material for ambitious political ends. "The ideas of our programme", he once declared in a speech, "do not oblige us to behave like fools." In view of his supreme disloyalty towards programmes and principles, a few staunchly nationalist rivals even tried during the Party's formative period to prove to Hitler that "in reality he was not an anti-Semite at all and in the long run would abandon the whole preceding anti-Semitic programme of the NSDAP if it were a question of picking up votes. . . ."[10]

The suspicion was erroneous but extremely revealing and an indication that even Hitler's anti-Semitism had its tactical aspect. Thus he remarked on occason that he was naturally aware that the racial theory was scientifically untenable; nevertheless the concept of Race was useful as a means of displacing that of the Nation. Elsewhere he commented that if the Jew did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.[11]

HITLER'S PATH was marked from the beginning by the utilisation of ideological elements in their classical function, that is to say for the purpose of obscuring or veiling the techniques of domination being put into practice. Thus he called upon ideological motives to explain why in 1913, after a phase of brooding inaction and wild day-dreams, he left Vienna. "The huge city seemed to me like the embodiment of blood-defilement." He also invoked his longing "to share in the joy, to be on the spot and active at the place where my heart's most burning desire must find fulfilment: the union of my beloved homeland with our common fatherland, the German *Reich*."

In actual fact, as is proved beyond any doubt by the subsequent discovery of his military papers, Hitler left Austria to dodge the draft. The whimpering letter he wrote to the "*Magistrat*

[8] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 36 ff.
[9] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 234.
[10] Martin Broszat, *Der Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 34.
[11] Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche*, p. 219 ff.

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Linz Dept. II", after being finally tracked down, reveals that in Munich too he remained true to the idling style of life of his Vienna years.[12] He earned an insecure living by the occasional sale of sketches or small watercolours, clung apathetically to dreams of a glorious career, abandoned himself to self-pity and hoped despairingly for a sudden change of scene, a miraculous turn of events.

His hope was not deceived. There exists a chance snapshot taken on 1 August 1914 showing Hitler, during the proclamation of a state of war, among the enthusiastic crowd in the Munich Odeonsplatz. It seems one can clearly see in his features the signs of that ecstatic excitement which he relates having felt on that day: "For me those hours came as a deliverance from the distress that had weighed upon me during the days of my youth. I am not ashamed to acknowledge today that I sank down upon my knees and thanked heaven from the fullness of my heart. . . ."[13] Against all expectation, this war afforded him the possibility of escaping from the problems of a life he had failed to master and fleeing from the loneliness of the years just past into the security of a structured community. For the first time in his life he had work to do, could feel solidarity with others, and could identify himself with the prestige of mighty and fear-inspiring institutions.

The war—with its freedom and the power to act outside the law which life at the front conferred on each individual, the experiences of battle and "the storm of steel", and of living in a community of men—all this supplemented and intensified the formative experiences of the ex-inmate of the men's hostel. He saw his vulgar maxims endorsed and, at the same time, his self-esteem received its first objective substantiation. Not for another four years, with the end of the War, was the fearless and bemedalled volunteer Adolf Hitler faced with the one thing he had obviously feared above all others: the threatening return to the terrors of normality. The outburst of despair with which he greeted the news of Germany's defeat was prompted not so much by a sense of national disaster as by private panic.

[12] The letter is printed in Franz Jetzinger, *Hitlers Jugend* (Vienna, 1956), p. 262 ff.
[13] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 177.
[14] Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Adolf Hitler* (Berne/Munich/Vienna 1964), p. 12.

The Politician

THE HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ACCOUNT of his decision to become a politician with which Hitler concludes the chapter of *Mein Kampf* dealing with the revolution of November 1918 shows it, in fact, to have been a last resort. The way it happened confirms the view that all great personal "decisions" in Hitler's life were exclusively acts of avoidance, flight reactions—from leaving school and making his way to Vienna, through the War and his first steps into politics, to the second war and the helplessly prolonged collapse. [14] Contrary to the popular image of the energetic and decisive leader, all the evidence we have unanimously stresses Hitler's unusual irrresoluteness, his tendency to allow developments to be governed by the working of chance forces and to compel himself to make a decision only when circumstances or opponents left him no choice. What he called *Schicksal* (Destiny) or *Vorsehung* (Providence) was nothing but the rationalisation of his unwillingness to reach decisions.

Every step taken by the returning soldier was dictated by the wish to escape from the duty and order demanded by the hated bourgeois world, and the same wish gradually led the special duty *V-Mann* from the Bavarian *Reichswehr* Group Commando 4 and so-called *Aufklärungsredner* (information officer) into the back alleys of Bavarian politics. Politics to him were the trade of the man who had no trade and wanted none. He drifted aimlessly, and gained his first psychological and rhetorical experience. He read the helpless resentment in the faces of the returning soldiers, who saw themselves cheated of everything that had given substance and greatness to their youth—the sacrifices, the heroism, the confidence—and he offered clearly-defined enemies for their blind and aimless anger. November criminals, the Jewish-Marxist world plot, national dishonour, *das System*, the Versailles disgrace, *Juda*, stab-in-the-back (*Dolchstoss*)—these were the topical slogans that spiced his first essays in public speaking.

A series of coincidences, which once more found him in a passive and irresolute posture, finally led him (in September 1919) to enrol in an insignificant popular group, the German Workers Party. He himself has described his hesitations before deciding, half ill-humoured, and half amused but above all because he lacked any sense of direction, to attend a few meetings

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of the philistine "squares" (*Spiesservereine*). Not a party in the narrower sense, but rather an example of the mixture of secret society and drinking club typical of the Munich of those years, it met in the back-rooms of local taverns until Hitler began to bring it before the public. October 16th, 1919 was as decisive for the party as it was for its new member. At its first public meeting, before an audience of one hundred and eleven, Hitler was the second speaker of the evening. The long-suppressed emotions poured out in a torrent of words. Breaking through the lack of verbal and personal contact of the last few years, he piled sentence upon sentence, fantasy upon insane fantasy, accusation upon accusation. "After thirty minutes the people in the little room were electrified", while Hitler happily abandoned himself to the overwhelming discovery: "I could make a good speech!"[15]

THIS WAS THE BREAKTHROUGH to himself, the great release, the liberating significance of which still left its imprint on the tone of his recollection of that evening. Before, or at least alongside, all political passion, it was the longing for self-confirmation that henceforth drove him again and again on to the speaker's platform in search of what he had once experienced there with an orgiastic sense of fulfilment. Eye-witnesses and early companions have stressed the unremarkable appearance of Hitler in those years, his lack of sparkle and his rather tedious triviality. Only when he stepped into the ever denser cordons, strode between tempestuous walls of people, lonely, withdrawn, but ready like a medium to be filled and borne aloft by the energy expressed in the masses' yell of anticipation, did he seem to acquire another, irresistible identity. He himself stated that in the presence of cheering crowds he became "another person."[16]

One glance into his confession, *Mein Kampf*, is enough to disclose the origin of his transformation. It was no mere metaphor when he compared the masses to "woman" (*dem Weibe*); rather, the idea of the masses aroused in him an entirely erotic ardour, and revealingly it helped the halting, rigidly cramped style of the book to achieve the only passages in which it flows freely. It was from these meetings, for which he hungered with ever-increasing greed, that this man who found it so difficult to make contact with others derived his substitute gratifications. The rhetorical outbursts with their ecstatic self-liberation alone offered him a way out of the monstrous narrowness and restriction of his being. "When he was not speaking," as Herbert Luethy once said, "he relapsed into his brooding twilight state: abandoned by his daemon, incapable of decision or action and sunk within himself—*post coitum triste*." [17]

BOTH AS A WRITER AND IN PRIVATE INTERCOURSE he invariably slipped into a monologue, ignoring the rules of rational argument and recognising only listeners or prompters. Even Mussolini, during his state visit of 1937, had to learn this when Hitler followed a meal by speaking without interruption for an hour-and-a-half to his visibly suffering guest, giving him no chance to get a word in edgeways. This experience was shared by many, especially the members of his intimate circle during the War, who had to put up with endless diatribes lasting into the small hours on art, philosophy, race, strategy, technology, or history. Desperately fighting back their exhaustion, they forced themselves into an attitude of unresisting respect.

"I talked, talked and talked again"—this was how he once explained the secret of his rise to power. In fact, even after he had seized power, it took constant rhetorical recharging of people's emotions to maintain his domination undiminished. But Hitler himself proved in a very personal, almost constitutional sense dependent upon these oratorical exercises also. During the War, when he exchanged the role of demagogue for that of field-marshal, this resulted in a lowering not only of his power over the minds of others, but also, hand in hand with this, of his own vitality. The rhetorical excesses that had accompanied his path, from his first appearances in the Munich beer halls to the exhausted efforts of the final years, never served merely to arouse the energies of others but also to stimulate his own. During the last phase of the War he complained in one of his depressive moods that he would probably never again in his life be able to make a great speech: the idea of the end in a general sense was linked in his mind with the idea of the end of his career as an orator.

[15] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 390 ff.
[16] Quoted in Konrad Heiden, *Adolf Hitler* (Zurich, 1936–37) Vol. 1, p. 335.
[17] Herbert Luethy, *"Der Führer persönlich"* in *Nach dem Untergang des Abendlandes* (Cologne, 1964), p. 128.

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The Orator

AMONG THE FACTORS which led to Hitler's success, the compulsive power of his oratory far surpassed all others, whether his tactical, statesman-like or even military abilities, whose comparatively narrow limits were temporarily concealed by the successes that a policy of audacious disregard for all rules can count upon for a time.

The intimate, smoke-laden atmosphere of Munich beer-halls saw the beginning of the skill which reached its zenith in the triumphal mass proclamations of the Nuremberg party rallies. With unfailing instinct Hitler could adapt to the moods, desires, and prejudices of an audience that was initially often sceptical, hostile, or amused, bringing about those feelings of contact that enabled him to attract a growing following. His trail was marked by an unbroken chain of conversions. People from every walk of life, every level of education, joined the ranks; no one seemed to be excepted, not even the French ambassador who, faced with the demagogic effectiveness of Hitler's oratory, confessed that "over and over again [he] became for a few minutes a convinced National Socialist . . . ."[18]

Defeat, inflation and the world economic crisis brought Hitler, above all, the members of the traditionally nationalistic, economically particularly hard-hit and mentally-disoriented middle classes who were drawn by the radicality of his slogans and felt their deepest needs understood. Whereas the Party programme, proclaimed in February 1920, sought to exploit the potential of all available hostilities, Hitler directed his ever more canny rhetorical art towards confusing the masses and giving political shape to their irrational desires, celebrating force as the remedy for difficult life situations and setting himself up as a saviour. Descending slowly by airplane above thousands of waiting people, far-off in the white searchlights seeking the first words and finally, a gesticulating phantom, bringing his audience to the melting point of mindless intoxication—this was how he acquired the features of that leader who, since time immemorial, has been in German political mythology the focus and crystallisation point for virulent feelings of dissatisfaction with reality.

CONTRARY TO APPEARANCES, Hitler's manner of addressing the masses did not spring from spontaneous inspiration but was the product of a very carefully thought-out method, in which nothing was considered unimportant or left to chance. The size of the gathering, the time of day, the composition of the audience, the artificial delay in the speaker's appearance while the crowd was whipped into a frenzy by the hoisting of banners, the playing of military music and shouts of *Heil*, until the speaker suddenly emerged before an audience made hungry by waiting and prepared for a collective ecstasy—all this was calculated down to the last detail. In keeping with the maxim that "only a crowd rendered fanatical can be led", the speech itself was aimed at achieving those effects most apt to produce fanaticism. The rousing slogans of indignation, the consciously primitive apportioning of blame, the systematic intensification of emotion, the pitch as well as the gestures carefully studied in advance with the aid of photographs—all this resulted in what Hitler described as "a tactic worked out to take precise account of human weaknesses, which was bound to lead with almost mathematical certainty to success."[19]

Walter Benjamin once remarked that Fascism merely gives the masses some outlets, but never their rights. Yet it seems that under certain circumstances the masses are content with an outlet. In Hitler first the hopelessly divided Right, and finally also the unpolitical *Bürgertum*, found an uncontested leader and therewith hopes, enemies, and orders to obey. He permitted them to equate their consciousness of undeserved national impotence and social degradation with a supposed elemental force, and by giving expression to this force to feel that they had overcome their helplessness.

Carried along by the enthusiasm of increasingly large crowds, Hitler talked his way to power; and it was above all with the weapon of oratory that he established and secured this power. Only in the pomp and circumstance of mass ecstasies, which the régime organised to increasing perfection, did it achieve its own identity. Constantly threatened from within by apathy, in order to assert itself it needed these ever-renewed frenzies, a permanent mood of intoxication or at least the expectation of spectacular events.

Its greatness rested on unstable foundations; its support depended upon manipulation. Hence the breathless restlessness with which, like a drug addict, it incessantly gave itself over to new

[18] Robert Coulondre, *Von Moskau nach Berlin, 1936–1939: Erinnerungen des französischen Botschafters* (Bonn, 1950), p. 473.
[19] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 45 ff.

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adventures and, above and beyond its enemies of the initial phase of the War, constantly found fresh adversaries, created new fronts, discovered new aims, opened new theatres of war—until finally it was destroyed by its own laws and nature.

The Tactician

HITLER SEIZED POWER in the course of two assaults employing different tactics, different means, and finally achieving a different success. The first attempt, which led to the abortive putsch of 9 November 1923, was clearly carried out in an extremely amateurish manner. This is shown not only by the actual course of events, which combines elements of farce with those of cops-and-robbers, or by the grotesque misjudgment of reality and possibility on the part of Hitler and his accomplices, but above all by the bizarre nature of the motivation, in which reactionary protest, nationalistic bigotry and a Bavarian sense of mission were aggressively intermingled. The uprising had no coherent political outlook or tactical plan, although the battle-cry *"Ordnungszelle Bayern"* and the call to a *"Marsch nach Berlin"* sought to feign both.

Lack of planning and a provincial indigence of thought brought the undertaking to an ignominious conclusion, although the legend later religiously embellished it. Moreover, Hitler learned a lesson from the round of gunfire with which a cordon of police broke up the column of demonstrators by the Munich *Feldherrnhalle*. The way in which he took it to heart and drew from defeat a theoretical and tactical moral for his future career showed insight, undoctrinaire imagination, and political shrewdness.

Hitler himself later came to regard the abortive uprising of November 1923 and the subsequent trial, which cost him about one year's confinement in the *Landsberg* fortress, as "perhaps the greatest piece of good fortune in my life." In fact the trial became the decisive turning-point in his self-knowledge and hence in his career. In his closing speech before the Munich *Volksgericht* Court, which was both tactically and rhetorically brilliant, he took all the blame for the unsuccessful enterprise upon himself, at the same time justifying his behaviour in the name of a higher patriotic and historical duty. In order to dissociate himself from the wretched efforts of the highly-placed individuals accused with him—with Ludendorff and von Kahr at their head—and to disclaim intimate involvement in the plot that had nevertheless been conspiratorially discussed between them for months, he challengingly proclaimed his new-found sense of mission. From that day forth he acknowledged no superior, from then on he no longer saw himself as a "drummer (*Trommler*)" and forerunner, but as himself the saviour, the *Führer*.

This experience afforded him at once the impulse and the point of departure for the struggle for power which he then embarked upon under entirely new conditions. To be sure, at his first attempt he had borne in mind Lueger's teaching that a politician must devote his attention, on the one hand, to winning the support of those strata of a population whose existence was most seriously threatened and, on the other, to gaining the good-will of influential circles and institutions. This is evident from his speeches and also from the many contacts he established with nationalistically-inclined people of importance in Munich (for the most part in the salons of rather motherly women friends, who rallied around him with belated resolution). But, as he now recognised, not only was the attempt to prepare the ground for conflict with the power of the state on a purely Bavarian plane doomed to failure, but so was the whole idea of a solution through *Konflikt*. His decisive realisation was that the concept of grasping state power by means of a violent coup was erroneous and that only legalistic tactics promised success. This certainly did not mean that in future Hitler was prepared to be limited in his struggle for power by the terms of the Constitution. All it meant was that he would avoid facing the gun barrels of state power, which had once been aimed at him, until he had those same guns at his command. "It will take longer, to be sure", he cynically declared, "to outvote our opponents than to outshoot them, but in the end their own Constitution will give us success."[20]

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, Hitler adhered strictly to this principle, although as political and economic conditions became more stable it considerably hampered his progress. Even when the world crisis drove the masses to him again, he defended his chosen path against every impatient revolt in his own ranks, preferring to undermine the Constitution rather than overpower it. At the same time German elections, which took place at ever shorter intervals,

[20] Quoted in Kurt Lüdecke, *I Knew Hitler* (London, 1938), p. 217 ff.

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enabled him to make strident use of his demagogic virtuosity and base his claim to power upon a growing number of votes. Even during a setback shortly before achieving his goal—while stifling the nervous vacillation of those around him with tears and threats of suicide—he stuck steadfastly to his tactical line. He put his trust in chance, which had so often come to his aid in the past, in the weakness and helplessness of his adversaries and in his own strength.

This idea, audacious and self-confident as it was, brought him to his goal on 30 January 1933. During the first months of his Chancellorship he also made it the basis of his conquest of internal German political power, and finally he guided his foreign policy by it. Throughout, he endeavoured to maintain the appearance of legality, always accompanying revolutionary or imperialist coups with assurances of his respect for law and order and his love of peace. Time after time, he was helped by chance, genuine or feigned strength, and the uncertainty of his opponents. As Chancellor, he quickly outmanoeuvred all his adversaries in a coalition cabinet with only three National Socialist members; and in foreign politics, too, he succeeded for a long time in achieving his aims without opposition. True, in both cases lies, blackmail, and broken promises prepared the ground. But in both cases his success rested ultimately upon the inability of his opponents to make up their minds whether to counter his dynamism with cautious concessions or vigorous rebuff. All of them finally chose what their illusions prompted them to choose.

He did not abandon the principle that had served him so well, until, spoiled by fortune, he began ever more recklessly to provoke military entanglements. It was his view that war, as he once said, was "a faithful copy of conditions during the period of the struggle for power". In fact, however, he had himself destroyed this parallel and in 1939 he repeated his mistake of November 1923. There is some reason to believe that his tactic of feigning a desire for peace and combining "unconditional demands" with gestures of apparent flexibility, would have gained him at least some of even his most far-reaching aims. But, corrupted by the feeling of his invincibility, dazzled by success, he abandoned his stated principle and, throwing all his own experiences (and other people's warnings) to the winds, reverted to the solution of the "*putsch*". And once more, as at the first attempt, but on a horrifyingly greater scale, he came to grief.

The Charismatic Adventurer

HITLER'S READINESS to take risks was not based merely on Germany's military preparedness, which he knew far surpassed that of any conceivable individual adversary; much more to the point was the fact that the nation now seemed to him to have been brought close enough to that unity in thought and feeling, transparently symbolised in the sworn partnership between leader and people, to stand up to a military conflict.

Even if the rather depressed mood of the country during the first days of war cast doubt on this belief, the régime was nevertheless able, in general, to count on the approval and, right up to the collapse, on at least the practical loyalty of the German people. Unquestionably, right from the start, the régime had to employ far less force than a belated resistance might lead one to suppose. Even Hitler's nomination appeared to the public not as a cabinet change on the familiar pattern, but, entirely in keeping with the régime's propaganda, as the revolutionary introduction of a new era. A wave of confidence, soon to become enthusiasm, lifted and carried those for so long dominated by feelings of depression, and let loose an irresistibly spreading urge to put their faith in the "*Führer*".

For once again Hitler was undisputedly the dominant reference point of events. In his hands lay not only tactical control of the process of conquest that was set in motion the very day after the so-called assumption of power and stroke by stroke, within twenty months, prised open all the key positions. It was also due to his charisma—unfolded with stunning success before an effective backcloth—that the régime, quite apart from its power, won over an unprecedented majority of the German people. The enthusiasm aroused by the new leadership was, of course, mingled with an element of uncertainty, or even anxiety, which was consciously exploited. Here was displayed once again the principle of the dual approach so typical of Hitler's psychological method of overcoming opposition. Just as he quickly concealed every breach of the law or the Constitution behind a smokescreen of protestations of respect for legality, so he never used force unaccompanied by the expression of scruples, and always alternated threats and acts intended to terrorise his opponents with poses showing him as a jovial friend of the people and little animals.

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The fraudulent cosiness of these genre self-portraits never failed in their effect, and they went far towards deceiving the judgment of the age—which was in any case in confusion over its moral categories—as to the character of the régime. In addition, doubts were calmed by the decisiveness with which it eliminated the "authority vacuum" of the preceding years, helped the nation to regain self-confidence, and bestowed *Ordnung* upon an order-loving people. It was helped further by the economic upsurge that corresponded so convincingly with the accession of the new men to power. Such worries as remained were gradually undermined and swept away by an efficient propaganda; the rest found expression merely in dissatisfied mutterings that led to no action. Never in its history—despite all legends that sprang up later—did the German nation feel so much at one with itself, and, at least in the exuberance of the first phase, it owed to the new régime the experience of an almost classless society. The phenomenon which an apologetic or re-education-motivated historiography later described as "the Resistance" to Hitler never, strictly speaking, existed. The very hopelessness of the isolated acts of purely individual resistance, which did in fact take place, is evidence of the total support enjoyed by the régime.

Tightly organised as the Hitler régime appeared on the surface, however, it was chaotic and confused when looked at more closely. This was an expression of one of the basic principles of totalitarian rule: the maxim that all authority should be unreliable. For the intentional imprecision in delimiting authority serves not merely to put the individual citizen in a state of extreme uncertainty, but at the same time creates power-complexes on every level that use up so much of their energy in conflicting rivalry that the highest pinnacle of government is in no danger. In addition, however, this confusion mirrors the origin of the leading men of the régime in the politicised metropolitan bohemia.

Hitler himself, after the hectically swift process of seizing power had been completed, reverted to his idle ways of the past. After only a short time, he refused to carry out the administrative duties of the Chancellorship. In keeping with the phrase used by the 18-year-old, he rejected everything about it that amounted to a "bread-and-butter trade." He soon tried to avoid the pressure of official duties by long absences from Berlin. Aimlessly he frittered away his days on whatever passing fancy happened to be occupying him. Almost every evening he would sit, dull and exhausted from doing nothing, in his private cinema, preferring undemanding drawing-room comedies with flat jokes and sentimental happy endings. It may have seemed to him that his early dreams linked with the purchase of a Viennese lottery ticket had come true after all, except that the level of aristocratic vagrancy far surpassed all his visions of those days. Only occasionally did he break out of his leaden inactivity into manic restlessness. The impression of breathless effort he created arose from these phases of sudden frantic activity.

The attempts at whitewashing made by the Nazi régime's leading accomplices repeatedly make reference to Hitler's gradual evolution to evil. The popular version of this argument praises the Autobahns and the "Strength through Joy" trips to Teneriffe, the order that reigned throughout the country, and the respect Hitler enjoyed abroad. According to this formula, Hitler went off the rails in 1938, contradicting all that had gone before, reacting "pathologically",[21] and risking not merely the material but also the moral existence of a régime which till then had been efficient even if strict. Seen from this viewpoint, the War appears merely as an avoidable error, and the extermination of the Jews, for example, as an act of stupidity that came out of the blue. In fact, however, war, the persecution of minorities, and genocide were not absurdities in which the régime became untrue to itself. They were its logical consequence and inseparable from the efficient manner in which it created order inside the country. The moulding of society into a totally directable unit was meaningful only in terms of expansionist aims. Only in war and extermination did the régime fully realise itself.

Man of His Word

IN A MANNER UNPARALLELED by any other statesman in history, Hitler revealed in writing exactly what he was inexorably aiming for through all detours, tactical alliances, vows of peace and apparent contradictions. Only the exaggerated tone of his statements prevented the world from taking seriously what was, in fact, meant absolutely literally. To the end, he remained bound to his early fixations, reconciled by neither success

[21] Johann Recktenwald, *Woran hat Hitler gelitten?* (Munich, 1963).

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nor responsibility. A comparison between *Mein Kampf* and the *Tischgespräche*, the two documents that mark the beginning and end of his career, emphatically confirms his own statement that his view of the world had not changed since his Vienna days.

The idea of expansion to the East, the "great Germanic March", remained the *leit-motiv* of Hitler's life. Here he sought to acquire those vast areas of land that would give weight and substance to the demand for world power. With apocalyptic inflexibility, committing the mass murder of whole nations and races, he launched that process of biological "stable-cleansing" of all alien "scum" as he called it,[22] that was to constitute the first stage in the Germanisation of Eastern Europe. The area was to be racially developed and imperially safeguarded by a system of airstrips, military installations, and defensive villages. In contrast to the new human type that was to be bred in the "seedbed of German blood (*Pflanzgärten germanischen Blutes*)" stood the "labouring people", who were consciously to be kept in a state of ignorance, poverty, and degradation.

As early as summer 1942 Hitler issued instructions to foster abortion in the occupied Eastern zone, to abolish all health care, and to spread a universal slave mentality. At about the same time he began to work out his ideas for stepping up the birthrate in Germany, in which the coarse triviality of small-animal breeders is horrifyingly transferred to the human world. New marriage laws were to make possible bigamy, the compulsory dissolution of childless marriages, and the compulsory marriage of childless women; a breeding points system was to facilitate the coupling of racially valuable individuals and, through "favourable combinations of seeds", to produce nothing less than "Nietzsche's *Übermensch* by means of breeding." With no feeling for other people's demands for life and happiness, destinies were dictated, national groups resettled, "bastard peoples" stamped out, "fishing expeditions" launched into neighbouring states in order to catch blonde, fair-skinned human material useful for "expanding the foundation of German blood."[23]

These "glimpses through the side doors into Paradise", which to begin with were reserved for Hitler's most intimate circle, reveal a depressing prospect: a world picture drawn from *Dreigroschenhefte*, from penny dreadfuls enveloped in the obscene ideological stench of the back streets. In the background, not far away and in embryo actually put into practice, rose the vision of a Greater German Empire with the world capital *Germania*, whose monstrous backdrops exceeded all human measure and accurately mirrored the régime's urge to impress. And the whole of this vast empire, from the North Cape to the Black Sea, was covered with a dense system of strongpoints, garrisons, camps and watch-towers, within whose protection a master race—proud, valiant, and lustful—pursued its murderous blood cult and the breeding of the Aryan god-man. In truth, only respect for the victims sacrificed to this desolate idyll silences mockery and freezes laughter.

There is, in my view, reason to believe that this vision constituted the innermost kernel of Hitler's faith. Even in the political testament which he wrote immediately before his death, he returned in a flood of words to the theme of racial self-assertion that was the drab and silly fixation-point of his life. Failed as a statesman, defeated as a general, in the midst of a collapse he himself had brought about, he wished at least to make his exit, unrefuted, as an ideologist.

IN FACT NO SPECIAL refutation was required. With the end of the power that had supported it, the National Socialist ideology itself passed away. Its abrupt disappearance almost without trace demonstrated once more how little it was the determining idea of the epoch and how much it was the alibi of a personal will to power.

Nevertheless, in view of the literally murderous approval Hitler's world-view enjoyed, he cannot be said to have stood in opposition to his epoch. Hitler's long-lasting power of attraction sprang precisely from the fact that he was able, with a mediumistic instinct, to capture latent states of mind and unite his demands with the conditions of the historical moment. Wherever and so long as he succeeded in doing this, he was virtually irresistible.

Yet he did not represent a moving idea of the age, but rather its fears, feelings of panic and

[22] Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Stuttgart, 1965), p. 387, where Hitler announces the application of this process to the "German living space," using the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich as a pretext. (English edition: *Hitler's Table Talk*, ed. H. R. Trevor-Roper, 1953.)

[23] See in this connection Joachim Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, 1963), p. 367 ff. (English translation, *The Face of the Third Reich*, London, 1970).

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defence complexes, and at the same time something of the trashy character of the epoch. The true revolutionary figures of history have all drawn their effectiveness from a unifying idea, a new notion of happiness that stirred the public imagination. National Socialism remained destitute of any utopia, even if it constructed over its negative attitudes visions of the future that gave the frightened masses illusory feelings of power. It formulated no promise of bliss, but merely of advantage. Its spokesmen did not want to make revolutionary changes in the world, but rather to ensure themselves a favourable place in it. Therefore they set about dissolving all old attachments, destroying all standards of value and all traditions. In this way, however little it may have been their intention, they considerably accelerated the social process. By transferring to it their stormy dynamism they were revolutionaries, even if they were revisionists in their thinking. Taking it all in all, they had very little more to offer in their ideological reasoning than the objectivisation of a greedy, obviously insatiable obsession with power.

For after all the enthusiasm, excesses, dynamic triumphs and coldly executed horrors, this is all that the astoundingly meagre intellectual basis for their actions adds up to. Rarely in history has the exercise of power, the imposition of great suffering, remained so devoid of justification as in this case. This lack is the natural distinguishing feature of a movement that willingly denied its own theories in its rather futile attempts at self-interpretation and preferred "pure action" to the development of a pure doctrine. But this lack is precisely what marks the judgment history has passed upon Hitler and his rule.

The Lesson

THE PHENOMENON OF HITLER delivered a severe blow to modern man's view of himself. Before the platforms on which he committed his rhetorical excesses the last remnants of an optimistic vision of mankind, imbued with lofty emotion, faded into nothingness. He taught that the mobilisation of millions of followers does not require a great or rational idea, or even an idea representative of the epoch. Even if the vision of a "national socialism" moved no small number of people at that time, the transparent fashion in which Hitler exploited this vision for his own purposes compels us to see that no idea worthy of the name is required, but merely certain preconditions, in order to arouse enthusiasm and self-surrender. Then phantasms and insane visions, of a kind that contradict each other and insult reason, can accomplish just as much as rational ideas, so long as they are combined with a vigorous will to power and the ability to spin words.

If the events of those years are inconceivable without the person of Adolf Hitler, they are also inconceivable without those devoted to him. When they rose from the collapse into which they had followed him, Hitler, in a movement of the general feeling of self-pity, turned from a *Führer* to a *Verführer,* from a leader into a misleader, a seducer. Strictly speaking, however, the other party to seduction is not so much the victim as the accomplice; seduction is impossible without at least a secret consent. The emergence and persistence of totalitarianism in any country demands a society totally at the disposal of the régime.

The prerequisites for this availability in the 1920s and '30s of this century were, for numerous reasons, present to an exceptional degree. Not only in Germany, but far beyond her borders, the leadership principle and the belief in force, nationalistic regression, an emotional upsurge of youth and militant romanticism gained notable successes. This is shown not only by the followings that Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, and many others were able to mobilise, but also by the ease with which Hitler, above all, was able to impress his epoch (and hence even his opponents). A considerable proportion of his following may undoubtedly be attributed to his adversaries' resigned conviction that their own era had come to an end and that both the future and history belonged to the other side.

The preconditions for outbreaks of totalitarianism exist almost unaltered today, though in a different key. They are the concomitants of highly developed societies that demand to be lied to about life. The need for secularised faiths and immature ideological longings—the whole complex of irrational reactions to the admittedly dark and obscure circumstances governing the modern world—brings with it the threat of a sudden reversion to totalitarianism. Even if Hitler himself came to grief and has been almost forgotten by a new generation, none of the preconditions for his rise to power have been eliminated. In this sense, he cannot be said to have failed; and it is advisable that he should not be forgotten.

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Arthur Koestler

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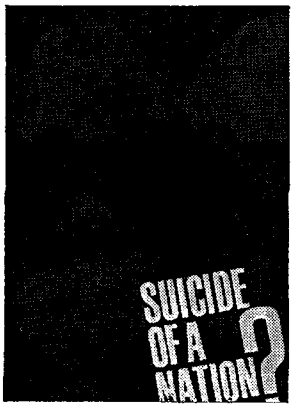
Ten Years On



THE TITLE needs perhaps a word of explanation. Ten years ago, ENCOUNTER invited me to act as a guest editor for a special issue devoted to the state of Britain. The cover design of that issue displayed the familiar coat of arms but with a slight difference: the unicorn had been replaced by an ostrich. The reason for this innovation was explained in the Preface as follows:

> In Greek mythology, a chimera is a monster with a lion's head, a goat's trunk and a serpent's tail. The Englishman strikes one as a much more attractive hybrid between a lion and an ostrich. In times of emergency he rises magnificently to the occasion. In between emergencies he buries his head in the sand with the tranquil conviction that Reality is a dirty word invented by foreigners. This attitude is not only soothing, but also guarantees that a new emergency will soon arise and provide a new opportunity for turning into a lion and rising magnificently to the occasion. . . .

To dwell on these leonine qualities would be considered embarrassing and in bad taste. One may nevertheless be permitted to speculate on the course history would have taken if, after Dunkirk, the lion had lost its moral fibre. In all probability, Europe would still be ruled either by Gauleiters or by Commissars, its élite purged, its resisters liquidated, its culture obliterated, its identity lost.

On the other hand, it seems equally probable that if the lion's alter ego had not kept its head buried in the sand during the years from Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland until well after Munich, the war could either have been avoided or won at incomparably smaller cost in human lives—and without delivering Eastern Europe into the hands of a rival tyranny.

The responsibility for this tragic failure cannot be laid on one particular party or social class or clique, although it used to be fashionable to do so. In fact, however, the illusion that sweet reasonableness can be a substitute for defensive preparedness was shared by the majority of the nation; and the policy of appeasement was based on that illusion—although in the Labour Party it went under the name of pacifism and was wrapped in anti-Fascist slogans. I recently came across a moving speech by Clement Attlee, delivered on 11 March 1935 in the House of Commons, in protest against the Government's proposal of a modest increase in rearmaments. When he suggested "disbanding the national armies" as a bright idea to save peace, he was interrupted by shouts of "Tell that to Hitler!", which he calmly brushed aside as irrelevant.

Thus, burying one's head in the sand is not a privilege of the ruling class. The Old Etonian, we are told, is on his way out, but the Old Struthonian (from *struthio*, Latin for ostrich) is still going strong in all walks of life, in striped trousers or in overalls, in the board-room or the Trade Union office. The results need not be stressed. When the War was over, Britain's prestige in Europe was at an unprecedented height. In less than twenty years it had been all but frittered away. One after the other of the defeated nations celebrated its economic miracle, while the only undefeated country steadily moved—to use that fashionable expression—toward the bottom of the European economic league; and if we are to believe the recent predictions of the Hudson Institute, this trend still continues. It seems that the ostrich has deprived the lion of his share.

THIS, AT LEAST, IS HOW post-War history looks when seen through the spectacles of the Continental observer. But naturalised Britons have two pairs of spectacles which we wear on alternate days. And when I put on the other pair of glasses —provided by the National Health Service—a rather different picture emerges. But this cannot

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be conveyed by statistical figures; and since these remarks are a personal affair, it may be permissible to indulge in some reminiscences.

IN NOVEMBER 1940, after the collapse of France, I found myself stranded in Portugal, together with thousands of other refugees, trying to get to England and back into the war. I was, however, a Hungarian national, and these were the days of the *Blitz* and Fifth Column scare, so the Home Office refused to grant me a visa. Nevertheless, with the help of the *Times* correspondent in Lisbon, Walter Lucas, and the passive connivance of the British Consul-General, Sir Henry King, I was able to board a plane bound for England without an entry permit. On arrival at Bristol I was promptly arrested and did a stretch of six weeks in Pentonville Prison as an illegal entrant, until my *bona fides* was established. The day after I was released from Pentonville, I went to the recruiting office in Duke's Road to enlist, and was told that it would take a couple of months until my turn came to be called up. I used this interval to write a book on the collapse of France; when the call-up order arrived I needed just another fortnight to finish it. So my publisher, old Jonathan Cape, wrote to the Recruiting Office asking whether it would be possible to obtain a deferment. The answer he received deserves to be quoted in full:

No. 3 Centre
London Recruiting Division
Duke's Road, W.C.1.
Euston 5741

12th February, 1941

Jonathan Cape Esq.
30 Bedford Square
W.C.1.

re Arthur Koestler

I am in receipt of your letter of the 11th instant contents of which have been noted.

As requested, I am therefore postponing Mr. Koestler's calling up, and would suggest that he calls at this Centre when he is at liberty to join His Majesty's Forces.

(Illegible signature)
Major
A.R.C.

When I read this memorable document, I was more than ever convinced that England must lose the war. Subsequent experiences in the Army did little to dispel this impression. I was assigned to the Pioneer Corps—the only branch of the Forces then open to non-allied aliens—to "Dig for Victory" as the posters invitingly said. My company—the 251st Company Aliens Pioneer Corps—was engaged on a fairly vital defence job to protect the petrol reservoirs in the vicinity of Bristol. (We were digging craters which, during air-raids, were filled with inflammable liquid and set ablaze to convince the raiders that they had accomplished their mission and could safely go home.) We were glad to do a useful job, but as you would expect from aliens, we became over-enthusiastic, so we asked our Commanding Officer (who was British) to do away with the ritual tea-breaks which—what with downing tools, marching to the distant cook-hut and back, morning and afternoon—cost nearly two hours of our working time, in addition to the lunch-break. The C.O. expressed his appreciation of our laudable zeal and explained that we had to have our tea-breaks whether we liked it or not because the British Pioneer Companies and the local unions of our civilian workmates would raise hell if we didn't. The time was about nine months after Dunkirk.

But then, unlike us, our British workmates were in no hurry because they could never for a moment consider the possibility that the war could be lost. The idea just did not enter their heads. There are apparently situations when the ostrich becomes an indispensable partner of the lion.

I REMEMBER some touching episodes. I had to spend a few days in a military hospital somewhere in Gloucestershire, and asked for permission to use my typewriter. The Sister in charge of the ward, a kindly middle-aged spinster, who had never before come across a British soldier with an accent like mine, listened to my request, thought for a while, then said: "All right, you can have your typewriter, but on one condition—you must give me your word of honour that you won't do any Fifth Column work on it."

Most of our cosmopolitan bunch in the 251st Company came across similar experiences, which delighted us; they made us feel that such holy innocence had an unconquerable quality. But other experiences left us rather bewildered. While digging for victory, we came into intimate contact with working-class life, and found it fundamentally different from its Continental equivalents. In the NAAFI canteens, in the pub, and later at the snooker table in a London ambulance station, I was taught to accept the stubborn persistence of the hoary cliché that people in general were divided into *Them* and *Us*.

But that "*Us*" had nothing to do with class-consciousness in the Marxist sense, as it existed in the Socialist and Communist Parties of Europe. Marxist dialectics was as much double-Dutch to

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the British working-class as it was to the rest of the nation. Instead of the fierce class-hatred which had scorched the Continent with revolutions and civil wars, there was an almost smug acceptance of living in a divided world, as licensed premises are divided into saloon bar and public bar. On the Continent, the symbolic gesture of militancy was the clenched fist; here it was closer to a shrug, a deliberate turning of one's back on middle-class standards of values, codes of behaviour, vocabulary and accent. Off duty our workmates were lively characters, full of fun and games; on the work site they moved like figures in a slow-motion film, or deep-sea divers on the ocean bed. They seemed to be conforming to a sacred doctrine, a set of unwritten maxims of life: go slow and take it easy or you are letting your mates down and we shall all be on the dole. It's a mug's game, anyway, and you are in it for life unless you hit the pools.

In the Libyan desert, or as rear-gunners in a bomber, they would have done a magnificent job; for in those circumstances the gulf would have been temporarily bridged by shared danger and hardship—and by the awareness of playing a man's game instead of a mug's game. The same lovable bloke who risked his life on D-Day to keep the country free would not lift a finger at Dagenham to put the country back on its feet.

It may seem as if I am flogging a dead horse, but to pronounce it dead does not make it so—or else this particular dead horse still has a vicious kick. "The most striking conclusion," Geoffrey Gorer wrote a few years ago, reviewing a book on the life of coal miners, "is how remarkably little high wages and secure employment have modified old habits and ways of life." It is, of course, true that the advent of the Welfare State, of the TV set and the washing machine provided the upper strata of the working class with some of the external trappings of middle-class life. The frontiers between Disraeli's two nations are no longer impenetrable; gifted young people of working-class origin cross the lines in increasing numbers, while the rebellious children of the bourgeoisie imitate proletarian habits and attitudes. Yet for the bulk of the population the frontier persists, separating two overlapping but distinct cultures, each with a different image of itself.

On the one side, the complex social pyramid of the middle and upper classes with its intricate sub-divisions, but with certain basic aspirations and values in common, which range from confused notions of gracious living to the glorification of the rat-race and of the joys of suburbia; its motto could be: "Compete, Compute, Commute" —the contemporary version of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. The other side will have none of it. As Professor Tom Burns wrote some years ago in an article with the significant title "The Cold Class War": "Competition for jobs, for promotion or privileged positions—the serious concerns of the middle-class adult, are disapproved of. . . ." In other words, the British working class seems to have become a powerful non-competitive enclave in a competitive world. To appreciate the contrast, compare John Braine's *Room at the Top* to Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*;

YOU WILL HAVE NOTICED that I am once more looking at the scenery through my murky Continental spectacles. Seen through native lenses, the apparent erosion of the class barriers since the War does indeed look impressive. It is reflected in the self-consciously classless attitudes of the new generation of students, in the regional accents put on by performers on the mass media, or in the deliberately vulgar appeal of commercial advertisements. They all seem over-anxious to demonstrate that we have moved into the age of the Common Man. Some of these attitudes are flagrantly bogus, while others may be genuine reflections of the changing socio-cultural climate —but you cannot get around the fact that in this industrial age the decisive test is the state of industrial relations, and the ultimate testing ground is the shop floor. And in this respect, putting on Continental spectacles is again useful, because they reveal that British social history since the end of the War differs fundamentally from that of other European countries.

During the early post-War period in Italy and France the Communist Party was the strongest single force both in the Trade Unions *and* in Parliament, and both countries seemed on the verge of civil war. But the rising curve of prosperity led to a corresponding decline in revolutionary fervour. Moreover, on the Continent there exist Socialist, Communist and Christian unions which compete for the workers' favours; and their openly declared political programmes are massively represented in Parliament, so that Trade Union politics has become a truly democratic game. In this country events seem to have moved in the opposite direction. Militancy

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in the Unions has increased instead of decreasing with growing prosperity, with a tendency to harden into the kind of cold class war where passive majorities are led by active minorities dedicated to ideologies which cannot muster a single elected representative in Parliament. This is a strangely paradoxical state of affairs in the oldest democracy in the world; it contributes to the industrial malaise and plays a significant part in its poor showing in the European league. But it is rarely ventilated in public debate. A Struthonian attitude is considered more appropriate, particularly by progressive middle-class intellectuals haunted by guilt.

IF ONE TRIES TO DIG DOWN to the roots of both the psychological malaise and our recurrent economic misadventures, another paradox emerges. In his Preface to the English translation of *Das Kapital,* Engels wrote in 1886 that Marx, "after a life-long study of the economic history and conditions of England", had been "led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means...." One of the reasons for this belief was, he explained, that the British bourgeoisie, instead of stringing up the aristocrats on lamp-posts, married their daughters and thus gave rise to a dynamic upper middle class in which feudal traditions became amalgamated with the mercantilism of the new entrepreneurs.

The natives of the Continent experienced a series of violent social revolutions in 1789, 1848, 1918 and 1945, which abolished or blurred traditional class distinctions and restructured the whole social edifice. Britain was spared these bloody upheavals, as it was spared foreign invasions, and was able to preserve the continuity of its traditions, institutions and social structure. But it had to pay a price for this immunity. Stability led to complacency and stagnation, which made itself felt in every domain of life, from an out-dated system of education, to the ancient guild structure of Britain's Trade Unions, as unique in the Western World as its weights, measures, and currency were until recently.

Seen through British eyes, Continental history was a permanent mess, from Robespierre through Lenin to Hitler, with flames bursting out of the roof every now and then. Seen through Continental eyes, the Englishman's proverbial castle was crumbling with dry rot. Somewhere between these two dramatised images lies the truism that islands used to be different—but no longer are.

This state of transition is manifest in the islanders' ambivalent attitude to the mainland. In the past, the decline and fall of Empires was an ugly, chaotic event; for the first time in history, this generation saw an Empire dissolve with a certain dignity and grace. But when it came to opting for the logical alternative based on the new geo-political realities, the ostrich once more raised its ruffled tail. In 1948 a whole continent cheered Ernest Bevin's sonorous pronouncement: "Europe must unite or perish." Yet for the next fifteen years it looked as if successive British governments did their level best to promote the second alternative. In 1950, when Britain was invited to join the European Coal and Steel Community, we refused; in subsequent years, as Europe's economic integration was gathering momentum, and repeated attempts were made to secure our participation, we again refused. It turned out to be an expensive miscalculation. Yet on various occasions British delegates walked out of conferences or took up an attitude reminiscent of Molotov's famous *nyet*, vetoing UNO resolutions. De Gaulle's trenchant *non* in 1963 is still remembered. But the events that led up to it are forgotten; the erstwhile flag-bearers of socialist internationalism have become a rearguard of insularity, irresistibly reminding one of the citizens of *Animal Farm* who no longer know whether two legs are good, four legs better, or *vice versa.*

THERE IS NO END to the paradoxes which this country can produce to surprise the world. The 1960s were a decade of recurrent economic crises, but also of unprecedented cultural euphoria. While editorialists of *Le Monde* and *Die Welt* sadly shook their heads and whispered about "the sick man of Europe", *Time* magazine published an enthusiastic cover-story about "swinging London." Industrial exports were in the doldrums, but mini-skirts and the Beatles conquered the world. Carnaby Street became a centre of tourist pilgrimage as the Tower of London had once been. The decline of the pound coincided with an upsurge of *joie de vivre*. The sick man became the trend-setter of Europe.

How is one to explain such a paradox? If one were to take a jaundiced view, one might call it

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an up-to-date, trendy manner of burying one's head in the sand—or deafening one's ears with discotheque rock. Alternatively one might regard it as a bloodless rebellion against traditions gone stale; or against the rat-race of competing, computing, and commuting; or, more melodramatically, as a reaction to existential despair. We can take our choice among these and other interpretations; personally I believe that within a few years the flashier aspects of this scene will have vanished like a set on a revolving stage, without leaving any lasting trace. But there are other aspects of contemporary culture, rarely discussed, which may indeed have a lasting effect.

A few weeks ago the Press came out with the remarkable disclosure that—I am quoting the *Daily Telegraph*'s headline—"BRITISH TEACHERS ARE THE WORST-PAID IN EUROPE." The reports were based on a survey by a market research group associated with Manchester University, and showed that in Britain an average secondary school teacher aged forty-five earned, after tax and other deductions, £1,670 a year; while his German equivalent netted £3,700; his Belgian colleague £3,300, the Dutchman £3,050, the Frenchman £2,700. Only the Italian schoolmaster, with a net earning of £1,600, earned £70 less than the Englishman. But even the Italian was better paid at the start of his career than his British colleague. Particularly relevant is the fact that the young teacher in Italy started with a salary 10% *higher* than the average industrial worker, whereas in Britain he started at 25% *lower*. The National Association of Schoolmasters commented: "Unless we are to become the peasants of Western Europe, a radical revaluation of teachers' pay is imperative."

One does not need to put on one's Continental spectacles to consider this situation as symbolic of the persistence of Struthonian attitudes. A schoolmaster in London's dockland, Mr Ralph Samuels, remarked: "When you tell anybody you're a teacher, you can see in their eyes that they think you must be either mad or incapable of getting a really decent job."[1] This is not just a question of money—although the contrast between Continental and British salaries speaks for itself—but of the teacher's social status, and of the general attitude to education—its purpose, methods, priorities, and its place in the general scheme of things. Above all, there is the delicate

[1] Quoted by John Montgomery, *The Fifties* (1965), p. 62.

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yet basic problem: how to reconcile the abstract ideal of equal educational opportunities for all with the hard realities of a social structure in which class-distinctions are being slowly eroded but are still strongly and resentfully felt, and are reflected in the glaring inequalities between one type of school and another.

THIS BRINGS ME, through only a slight digression, to my favourite hobby-horse—though you may consider that too a dead horse, if I may mix my metaphors. I mean that, regardless of all optimistic assertions to the contrary, people still take it for granted that a person's social background can be instantly identified by the way he manipulates his vocal chords and oral cavities (unless he has a Hungarian accent, which puts him into a classless limbo).

Most Englishmen, however enlightened, are frankly incredulous when you try to convince them that in France, for instance, some regional patois apart, the vocabulary and pronunciation of the concierge or *femme de ménage*—the equivalent of our Mrs Mop—is indistinguishable from that of the lady whom she serves, and that the old jokes about dropped aitches were an exclusively English speciality. The cause of the difference lies of course mainly in the educational system which in France is essentially uniform, based on competitive selection, where rank and privilege confer only marginal advantages. Access to the two pinnacles of learning, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* and the *Ecole Polytechnique* is exclusively based on the candidate's merits. As already said, the affectations of middle-class youngsters acquiring working-class accents and attitudes, or the synthetically classless *BBC*-English strike one as no more than inverted snobbery—which merely proves that one cannot escape becoming a snob of *some* sort in England any more than getting sun-tanned in Majorca.

There is, however, one particular type of snobbery that one cannot help admiring—the British contempt for over-efficiency, for German *Tüchtigkeit*; the refusal to become hypnotised by growth for growth's sake; and the quiet conviction—or illusion—that Britain is Greece to the Romans across the Channel. Needless to say, if carried too far, this attitude helps to breed more ostriches; nevertheless it has its strong attraction in defending the place of value in a world of facts. It is, after all, a remarkable phenomenon that the popularity of the Earl's Court Motor Show has not diminished the popularity of the Chelsea Flower Show. Rolls-Royce may be in the doldrums, but we keep the aspidistra flying.

THE LATE CECIL DAY-LEWIS once wrote these lines, which stuck in my memory:

Traveller, know
I am here to show
Your own divided heart.

I have tried to offer a glimpse into the divided heart of that contradiction in terms, the naturalised Briton. Yet if you come to think of it, to be born as a British citizen requires neither effort nor an act of choice; to become one requires both. And, reverting once more to snobbery, I can boast of a unique education, for my prep school was Pentonville, and the Pioneer Corps my Eton. If, even after thirty years in this country, I still sometimes feel a stranger among its natives, the moment I set foot on the Continent, I feel British to the bone.

Frequently I am asked by one of my disgruntled native friends why, having once lived in sunnier climes, I choose to live in this country with its foul weather, indifferent food, greedy tax collectors and bitchy book-reviewers. I have tried to answer that question in an autobiographical book, though the answer, I am afraid, is not very original. Like many Continentals of a similar background and history, "I have found the human climate of this country particularly congenial and soothing—a kind of Davos for bruised veterans of the age of Hitler and Stalin. When all is said, its atmosphere still contains fewer germs of aggression and brutality per cubic foot in a crowded bus, pub or queue than in any other country in which I have lived."

My friend, George Orwell, expressed this feeling much better when he wrote about "England's crowds with their mild, knobby faces, their bad teeth and gentle manners, this nation of flower-lovers and stamp collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts players and crossword-puzzle fans. . . ."

And here you have the ultimate paradox of the naturalised Briton: he starts his pilgrim's progress by admiring the lion and ends up by being rather fond of that preposterous ostrich.

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John Weightman

Madame de Staël

Dix Années d'Exil,[1] which was written between 1810 and 1813, is an early and noble example of a kind of writing with which, in its commoner forms, we have become only too familiar in the 20th century; it can be called "refugee literature." Our period enjoys the sad privilege of having produced the greatest number of "displaced persons" who have felt the need to explain the tragedy of their predicament to themselves and to others. Mme de Staël, writing during the strains and stresses of the Napoleonic era which had followed on from the upheaval of the French Revolution, is a forerunner of those innumerable distinguished individuals of many countries driven into exile by the Russian Revolution, the Fascist and Nazi tyrannies, the Spanish Civil War, the Stalinist dictatorship, and the development of authoritarian régimes in all parts of the world.

Of course, exile, even in its cruellest forms, is not an invention of the modern era. In the past, whole populations were often carried off into slavery and remained mute; others, more fortunate, at least managed to record how they sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept. There is a literature of exile which is as old as history, and which resulted from traditional disturbances, such as tribal rivalries and territorial quarrels. Refugee literature, on the other hand, dates from the invention of modern politics and depends on the individual's sense of the involvement of his particular destiny with collective forces. Any reader of *Dix Années d'Exil* will see at once that Mme de Staël is presenting herself as an independent political consciousness trying to defend certain principles in a hostile situation. She is not writing memoirs simply to put on record a series of interesting or harrowing adventures. She relates all the details of her plight to a general philosophy of society, an Enlightenment philosophy full of echoes of Montesquieu and Rousseau. This makes her very different from some other memoir-writers of the post-Revolutionary period, such as Mme de Genlis, Mme de la Tour du Pin, or Mme de Créqui, spirited though these *ci-devant* ladies may be. Mme de Staël's book is both a document and a manifesto, and is therefore comparable to that very early Enlightenment pamphlet against tyranny, *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique sous le règne de Louis le Grand*, written by another refugee, Pierre Bayle, in protest against Louis XIV's persecution of the Huguenots.

As it happened, *Dix Années d'Exil* was not published until 1821, by which time Napoleon himself was in exile and Mme de Staël was dead, but it retains its force and its relevance, because she had lived by the ideas it embodies and, more than any single person in Europe, had campaigned against Napoleonic rule. However, she makes one slight error of judgment in her book, when she says, with reference to Peter the Great, "Despots have no flatterers a hundred years after their death. . . ." She could not foresee that Peter the Great would be revived by Stalin. As for Napoleon, he has been dead for nearly 150 years and he still has a great many flatterers, since no one has ever surpassed him as an embodiment of the universal dream of power. Although she was only a woman, in a period long before general female emancipation, Mme de Staël can claim the honour of having made a valid political objection to Napoleon in his heyday and of being an effective thorn in his side during his whole career.

But the truth has many levels. The life and character of Mme de Staël are extremely complicated, and both her general behaviour and her relationship with Napoleon have been variously

[1] *Ten Years of Exile*. Translated by Doris Beik with an introduction by Peter Gay. Saturday Review Press (New York), $10.00. There is also a reprint of the 1821 London edition, with Auguste de Staël's comments (Centaur Press, 1968). Although this original, anonymous translation is marred by occasional gallicisms, it has a period flavour.

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interpreted.[2] By now, through the publication of her letters and other documents, we know a great deal about her that she did not reveal either in *Dix Années d'Exil* or in the larger, more objective, historical study, *Considérations sur la Révolution Française* (1817). The simplest way, perhaps, to make sense of the vast amount of data now at our disposal, and to see *Dix Années d'Exil* in its correct perspective, is to try to distinguish between the individual person and the political ideas. In the last resort, of course, the two are inseparable, but there is a case for considering them in turn.

As Germaine Necker, the daughter of M. Necker, the Swiss financier who became *Contrôleur Général des Finances* under Louis XVI, Mme de Staël belonged to the reformist section of the upper class. Whether or not her father was always correct in his financial and political initiatives, he was certainly well-meaning and progressive, according to 18th-century views. He may even be said to have set the Revolution in motion, since it was he who advocated the summoning of the Estates-General, and for a while he was a popular hero.

Mme de Staël, 1797 (*portrait by Isabey*)

At the beginning of the Revolution, Mme de Staël was full of Enlightenment enthusiasm, and her political ideal (like her father's) was the establishment of a constitutional monarchy along English lines. Eventually, she was willing to accept the Republic as a *fait accompli*, although she thought the country unprepared for it and, from the vantage point of Switzerland, had written a generous pamphlet in defence of the Queen. When Bonaparte first emerged, she was delighted with him as a man of outstanding ability who could be expected to restore order and put the Revolution back on the rails. She even had a bust of the hero in the drawing-room of her father's house at Coppet, although M. Necker was rather sceptical about Napoleon's intentions. The elder statesman was quickly proved right. Instead of restoring the monarchy or establishing representative government, Bonaparte consolidated his personal power stage by stage and eliminated, or brought to heel, all the moderate elements associated with Mme de Staël, until she was isolated as the main voice of protest. When she tried to mobilise opinion against him, he accused her of intrigue and banished her from Paris. The skirmishing went on for years, with Mme de Staël struggling to get back to the capital and Napoleon warning her off at the frontier or allowing her into France but only at a certain distance from Paris. Furthermore, the official papers made vicious attacks on both her private life and her books. In short, Napoleon's personal, authoritarian régime, which was eventually clothed in the archaic trapping of Empire and found itself committed to a policy of continuous warfare, could not have been further removed from the sort of peaceful, progressive, liberal government she had in mind.

She was never prepared to admit that Napoleon himself, as some historians have argued, was caught in an evolving situation where one thing led to another, so that he was carried to a position of extreme power and involved in a policy of conquest through the operation of collective forces beyond his control. As she clearly states in Chapter I, she saw him as an unprincipled adventurer who misused his superb gifts. To put it in modern terms, under Napoleon, the idealistic content of the Revolution, poisoned by the errors that had been committed, turned into pure aggressive *project*. When Mme de Staël finally fled across Europe and became engaged in the negotiations between Russia, Sweden, and England which led to the downfall of Napoleon, she was conscious of fighting against her beloved France for its own good. Nor can her most

[2] See, for instance, Georges Solovieff, *Mme de Staël, ses amis, ses correspondants* (Editions Klinsieck, 1970). Simone Balayé, *Mme de Staël, Napoléon* in *Europe* (avril-mai 1960). Comte d'Haussonville, *Mme de Staël et M. Necker d'après leur correspondance inédite* (Calmann Lévy, 1925). Paul Gautier, *Mme de Staël et Napoléon* (Plon, 1903). J. Christopher Herold, *Mistress to an Age* (London and New York, 1959).

Mr Peter Gay's Introduction to the new edition follows the general pattern of Herold's interpretation, as he himself says. My comments offer a slightly different placing of the emphasis.

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determined enemies claim that she exulted in Napoleon's defeat; she even carried magnanimity to the point of informing him about a plot against his life during his imprisonment on Elba. After Waterloo, the very firm line she took in her correspondence with Wellington and the Emperor of Russia shows that, in spite of her Swiss origins and foreign marriage, she behaved instinctively as an enlightened French patriot. Her major political testament, *Considérations sur la Révolution Française,* which covers almost the whole range of her active life, remains a remarkably lucid and fair-minded analysis of that complex period.

IF THE BASIC FACTS are summarised in this way, Mme de Staël appears quite rightly as someone who suffered and struggled a great deal in the cause of liberty. But there is an immediate respect in which the modern reader of *Dix Années d'Exil* may find the tone of the text a little puzzling. The totalitarian régimes of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia have accustomed us to appalling excesses of cruelty, and in comparison with them Napoleon's rule seems strangely mild and ineffectual. He never instituted any blood-bath in the manner of the Reign of Terror. Atrocities were committed in Spain; and there was the international scandal of the summary execution of the Duc d'Enghien, which Mme de Staël describes with horror. But these things pale into insignificance when compared with the wholesale executions and deportations of the 20th-century, or even with the religious persecution instituted by Louis XIV in the 17th. Napoleon was not a gratuitously cruel despot. He never actually did Mme de Staël positive harm, apart from interfering with the publication of *De l'Allemagne* (1810). Although master of Europe, he does not appear to have made difficulties about her financial arrangements, so that, wherever she was, she continued to live like a wealthy *grande dame*. The greatest cruelty she complains of is exile from Paris, which she refers to with shocked dismay, as if it were tantamount to exclusion from the Garden of Eden, although at all times she had at her disposal the splendid family estate at Coppet in Switzerland. One might have thought that, after the scenes she had witnessed in Paris, she would not have been so keen to return there and that, in any case, no single town could be essential to her happiness, since her intellectual interests were international. But her obsession with the French capital was a major factor in her life. Paris was the centre of the intellectual universe. Her mother's *salon,* and then her own, had been the centre of Paris. Nowhere else could she feel fully alive. She had grown up, as it were, with her finger on the pulse of civilisation and it was intolerable to her that she should be ousted from this position, especially by a man who, gifted though he was, had neither Parisian polish nor any serious respect for ideas.

NOT THAT Mme de Staël was a social or even an intellectual snob; she was far too busy and involved to be interested in mere appearances. But to understand some of her indignation, which may at times seem exaggerated, and to grasp why Napoleon did not simply confiscate her property and clap her into gaol, one has to appreciate the historical context. She was a member of the privileged upper class and, although that class had been permanently shattered by the Revolution, its survivors did not necessarily change their habits, nor could Napoleon afford to offend them beyond a certain point, since—perhaps mistakenly—he felt them to be an important part of the national consensus on which his power depended. He might insult or harass them individually; he supported them as a social category, and paid them the compliment of intermarriage with his numerous relations.

In one sense, Napoleon was a Corsican upstart with a local accent and a strong popular following; in another sense, he became an upper-class dictator, and so his rule, far from being totalitarian in the modern sense, was in some ways as approximate as the authority of the old monarchy had been. Even when she was under sentence of banishment by Napoleon, Mme de Staël could go and stay with his brother Joseph, and Joseph put himself to considerable trouble to intercede on Mme de Staël's behalf. She gives a moving account of the events of the beautiful September afternoon when a gendarme was sent to tell her that she must reside not two, but forty, leagues from Paris. For us the episode now has an old-world charm—it is almost as quaint as the legendary scene at the Battle of Fontenoy when the French officer raised his hat, bowed and said: *Messieurs les Anglais, tirez les premiers!*—since the official had been chosen because of his literary interests and conducted himself with great politeness. Besides, whenever Napoleon sent Mme de Staël on her travels, she thought it only natural that she should be received as an honoured guest by Napoleon's prefects, and they, by and large, worked on the same assumption, until Napoleon shook some of them up. The most surprising detail of all, perhaps, is that during the Hundred Days, when one might have expected Napoleon's Cabinet to have more pressing matters to attend to, it spent some time on the question of the repayment to Mme de Staël of the two million *livres* which her father had lent to the French Treasury when he was in office. In fact, Mme de Staël did not, and could not,

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realise how lucky she was. Neither Hitler nor Stalin would have allowed her to trundle across Europe in a coach, attended by servants, children, tutors and a young lover, and preaching dissidence wherever she went. They would have liquidated her at a very early stage, before she had had time to play any historic role. She benefited from the fact that, in the Napoleonic era, the modern world was still old-fashioned enough to accommodate picturesque anomalies.

IN ANOTHER RESPECT, too, Mme de Staël could not be fully conscious of her personal and historical advantages. While not an aristocrat by birth, she was totally aristocratic through social conditioning, except that her intellectual interests were much broader than those of the average aristocrat. Her father's wealth and political eminence, allied to her mother's ambition to have a great *salon*, gave her a start in life such as few people have enjoyed. She was brought up on terms of equality with the highest French and international society, although its members sometimes tended to poke fun at the seriousness of the Necker family. When the time came to find her a husband, who had to be a Protestant because of the family religion, her mother's favourite candidate was no less a person than Pitt the Younger, but it remains uncertain whether or not that gentleman was ever approached; however, Germaine states in a letter that she "refused" him.

MME DE STAËL & BENJAMIN CONSTANT
(from a drawing by her great-great-grandson, the Prince de Broglie)

After protracted negotiations, the choice eventually fell on Eric Magnus de Staël Holstein, the representative in France of the Swedish King, Gustavus III, and the Neckers demanded that his ambassadorship should be made permanent, so that there might be no danger of their daughter being whisked off to Sweden. They obtained satisfaction, the wedding-contract was signed by Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, and Germaine's marriage almost had the status of a Franco-Swedish alliance. Later, when Necker fell from power and Louis XVI ordered him to leave France at a moment's notice to prevent popular disturbances in his favour, the Neckers appear to have taken it for granted that M. de Staël should escort them, as if his responsibility to them took precedence over his diplomatic duty as the representative of his King.

It seems inconceivable to us that an ambassador should confuse his position as a son-in-law with his function as an envoy, but such oddities were not unusual under the Old Régime. The European upper class was so supremely and unthinkingly self-confident that even later, in Napoleon's time, as Mme de Staël relates, the English ambassador could read out the proposed terms of the Treaty of Amiens to a mixed dinner-party. She doesn't comment on the fact as being strange, although the implication is that the treaty had not yet been signed, so we may suppose that, as between equals, there was no concept of indiscretion. She herself, being a woman, could not occupy any official position except that of wife of the Swedish Ambassador; but this did not prevent her behaving spontaneously as a political figure in her own right, in a way that no 20th-century woman, however emancipated (and no man, for that matter), could hope to emulate. That she was a person of great ability and drive goes without saying; but her talents were reinforced by a social confidence so complete that she was not even aware of it, by solid wealth, and by a Rousseauistic moralism derived from her Swiss parents.

The combination added up to a formidable individual. Her idea of solitude was to be living in a *château* with only half-a-dozen guests. Her notion of a normal existence was to preside over a Parisian *salon* frequented by people all at the centre of affairs and attentive to her opinions. When she wanted something she expected to get it. Her correspondence reveals her as an instinctively dominant personality, who was not prepared to take no for an answer from anyone, whether it was Goethe, Benjamin Constant, or Napoleon himself. On the one hand, Napoleon messed up her life both politically and personally, because she fell foul of him almost from the

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start; on the other hand, she was able to make a great issue of the clash, because her intellectual attachment to freedom was not simply an Enlightenment principle in which she strongly believed; it was helped by a personal assumption of autonomy almost as great as his own. He was an Emperor, but she was a sort of self-appointed Empress.

WE CAN EVEN TOY with the idea that she might have been his Empress! A love-affair between Napoleon and Mme de Staël! The conjunction would have been as remarkable as that of Caesar and Cleopatra. Pascal remarks that if Cleopatra's nose had been longer, the history of the world would have been different. If Mme de Staël had been slimmer and more conventionally attractive, Europe in the 19th century might have evolved more satisfactorily. It is said that when the young Bonaparte was in the first flush of his fame, Mme de Staël wrote him passionate letters pointing out that Joséphine was quite unworthy of such a hero, and that he should unite with someone who was his intellectual equal. The letters are not extant, and the story may be a malicious invention on the part of Napoleon or some writer of memoirs. But, judging by the existing Staël correspondence, one has to admit that it is not altogether out of character.

As a letter-writer, Mme de Staël was not without some resemblance to Julie, the heroine of Rousseau's novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse;* she sometimes threw discretion to the winds and indited ardent epistles to young men. It is certain that she was fascinated by Bonaparte in the early days. She arranged to be in Talleyrand's office when, as a minister, he received the young general after the Italian campaign. She more or less admits herself, in the *Considérations*, that she followed Napoleon around Paris and tried to engage him in discussion, but that he consistently avoided her. If, at any time, he had taken a positive interest in her opinions and done her the honour of consulting her directly about affairs of state, things might have been very different. But he thought her sexually unattractive; he liked women to be decorative squaws; and he had no patience with theorists. Napoleon was Mme de Staël's one great failure. She, who conversed familiarly with all the outstanding personalities of her time, could establish no communication with him. The remote possibility of an understanding did not occur until The Hundred Days, when Napoleon had been humbled and was prepared to compromise. But by then the Napoleonic adventure was doomed, and Mme de Staël herself was showing signs of the physical decline which was to lead to her death in 1817.

The tragi-comedy of their disastrous personal relationship, or absence of relationship, was probably of no account in Napoleon's private life. For him, Mme de Staël was never anything more than a political irritation, although important enough on that level; for her, given the psychological and sexual peculiarities of her make-up, about which a considerable amount of information is available, Napoleon must have been a deep and intimate disappointment, as well as a political menace.

THE FACT IS THAT Mme de Staël's commanding personality was accompanied by an unappeased temperament, which gave her a great deal of trouble.

The list of her lovers, while not as staggering as Edith Piaf's, can bear comparison with George Sand's. Napoleon's opinion about her lack of sex-appeal was obviously extreme; she was never pretty or elegant, but most sources are agreed that she had fine eyes, handsome arms and the most brilliant flow of conversation. Most of her lovers were good-looking men and, in the initial stages at least, passionate enough. Her husband, M. de Staël, while himself no paragon of virtue, occasionally felt obliged to manifest symptoms of jealousy in the early years and, in spite of her moralistic training, there are signs of prevarication in her letters to him. Certainly, her passionate heart made it impossible for her to respect the marriage vows as her father and mother would have wished. Her four children were all illegitimate. The first two, Auguste (the editor of the original edition of *Dix Années d'Exil*) and Albert, were fathered by Comte Narbonne de Lara, a bastard son of Louis XV and officially the child of a lady-in-waiting but perhaps the product of an incestuous union between Louis and his daughter, Madame Adélaïde; needless to say, Auguste de Staël gives no hint of his royal, though dubious, descent, but it is difficult to believe that he did not know about it. The third child, Albertine, later Duchesse de Broglie, was apparently the daughter of Benjamin Constant, and the fourth, Louis Alphonse, was the son of Jean de Rocca, a young Swiss twenty years younger than Mme de Staël, whom she married secretly towards the end of her life. The roll-call also includes at least six other lovers and—such are the ironies of history—one of them was "the handsome regicide", a Swede named Ribbing who had been involved in the assassination of Gustavus III, the monarch with whom Mme de Staël's marriage had been negotiated.

Yet this well filled sex-life was never very happy. The correspondence shows the same pattern repeating itself, except in the case of Rocca with whom, perhaps because he was not

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SHORTLY AFTER *the 18th Brumaire, it was reported to Napoleon that I had warned my friends against the dawning oppression whose growth I foresaw as clearly as if the future had been revealed to me. Joseph Bonaparte, whose intelligence and conversation I enjoyed, came to see me and said, "My brother is complaining about you. Yesterday he said to me, 'Why does Madame de Staël not support my government? What does she want? Is it the restitution of her father's deposits? I will order it done. The right to stay in Paris? I will grant it. In short, what does she want?' " To this I replied "My God, it is not a question of what I want, but of what I think."*

WHILE Talleyrand directed foreign affairs, Fouché, as head of the police, was charged with the revolutionary side of Bonaparte's government. Where Christian kings have been known to have two confessors in order to examine their consciences more carefully, Bonaparte chose two ministers—one from the old and the other from the new régime—whose business was to place the Machiavellian methods of two opposite systems at his disposal.

In all his appointments Bonaparte followed much the same rule, drawing—as it were—sometimes from the right, sometimes from the left; or, in other words, choosing his officers alternately from among the aristocrats and the Jacobins. The middle party—partisans of liberty—pleased him less than all others because it was composed of the small number of Frenchmen who had opinions; he preferred to deal with those who had supported royalist interests or were discredited through popular excesses.

He would like to persuade men that force and cunning are everything and that all else is stupidity or folly. He himself spoke to one of my friends, a few days after the 18th Brumaire. "It is necessary," he said, "to do something new every three months, in order to captivate the imagination of the French nation, with whom anyone who stands still is lost". Although this man is so impatient by nature, he has the ability to remain immobile when necessary; he gets it from the Italians, who know how to control themselves in order to attain the object of their passions.

I WAS AT *the Minister of the Interior's ball and, as General Bonaparte was not dressed in any distinctive way I found myself at his side without recognising him at first, when suddenly I perceived that it was he, and I experienced such a shock that I drew back to let him pass with an involuntary exclamation. I saw him again frequently at the same epoch and each time I felt more constrained in his presence.*

I STILL BELIEVE that if he had encountered a man of firmness as well as integrity among his adversaries, Bonaparte would have been stopped short in his career. His great talent lies in terrifying the weak and making use of unprincipled men. When he encounters honesty anywhere, it is almost as though his deviousness is exorcised, as evil spirits are, by the sign of the cross.

But it might be said that the continental powers went out of their way to cede what they should never have permitted to be taken from them except in battle. In their relations with Napoleon the great powers behaved as if they were eager to sanction his injustices and legitimise his conquests, whereas even if he could not be conquered, they ought never to have accepted his behaviour. This certainly was not asking too much of the old governments of Europe, but they were totally confused by such a novel situation; Bonaparte so bewildered them by his barrage of simultaneous threats and promises that they believed they would gain by conceding, and rejoiced at the word "peace" as if the word still carried its former meaning.

I WENT TO GENERAL BERTHIER'S *one day when the First Consul was to be there, and as I knew how hostile he was to me, I thought that he might perhaps use some coarse expressions with which he liked to address even women who paid him court. Before going to the party I wrote out at random several dignified and biting responses that I might make, depending on what he said to me. I did not want to be taken by surprise if he insulted me, for that would have been to show myself even more lacking in character than in wit; and since no one can be certain of not being confused in his presence, I prepared myself beforehand to face him. Fortunately, the precaution was unnecessary; he asked me the most ordinary question imaginable. The same thing happened to all his opponents whom he thought capable of forceful replies: whatever the contest, he never attacks except when he believes he is very much the stronger.*

[Madame de Staël has not told all about this interview with Bonaparte at Berthier's. We know what was "the most ordinary question imaginable." She had confided it to the Russian Golovkin, who recorded it in his unedited Souvenirs. *Madame de Staël had spent "two days and two nights" writing out answers to all subjects that her enemy might bring up. Well, Bonaparte, followed by his brother Lucien, stopped before Madame de Staël, perceived her bare shoulders, and said brusquely, "You doubtless nursed your children yourself?" Madame de Staël remained mute, petrified: she had not foreseen that question.]*

NAPOLEON had an absurd argument against the opposition published in the press. Nothing is so natural, it said, as an opposition in England, where the king is the enemy of the people, but in a country where the executive power is chosen by the people, to oppose the nation's representative is to oppose the nation. How many similar phrases have Napoleon's writers not thrown out to the public during the past ten years. In England, a simple

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peasant would laugh at this kind of sophism, but in France, all people want is precisely some such phrase to lend credence to their pursuit of selfish interests.

Bonaparte continued to appoint men of all factions to public office. In France the great strength of the heads of state lies in people's prodigious desire to hold office; and vanity even more than need for money explains this desire. The French are partial to anything which distinguishes one man from another; no nation is less suited to equality; they proclaimed it in order to displace the old upper classes, wanting to change that inequality, but without subjecting themselves to the only political code worthy of admiration, one that makes all men equal before the law.

HE DID NOT *even bother to be genuinely hypocritical. Faithful to his custom of deceiving openly, by providing lies for those who ask nothing more than to make use of them as pretexts, he assured the priests that the Catholic religion was the only truly orthodox one; and on the same day, speaking with Cabanis, a philosopher in the style of the eighteenth century, he said to him, "I want to re-establish religion the way you do cowpox—use it to inoculate in order to destroy it." This witticism is worthy of note. He made several others which might be included in an anthology on the principles of evil.*

LE MONITEUR WAS FILLED with written discourses to the First Consul congratulating him on his escape from danger, the constant repetition of the same stock phrases coming from all corners of France, shows a generalised state of servility perhaps without precedent in any other nation. In leafing through back copies of the *Moniteur*, one can find essays on liberty, on despotism, on philosophy, and on religion, according to the period, in which the good citizens and departments of France strive to say the same thing in different terms. It is amazing that men as clever as the French should be content only with stylistic success and never once experience the desire to have ideas of their own; it could be said that verbal competition is sufficient for them.

FOR SEVERAL DAYS *after the murder of the Duc d'Enghien the First Consul was rather anxious about the prevailing mood. Fouché himself disapproved of the act. He had made this remark, so characteristic of the present régime: "It is worse than a crime, it is a mistake." There are many ideas implied in this sentence, but happily it can be turned around, and made to express a truth, that the greatest of errors is crime.*

Bonaparte asked "What do people think about the Duc d'Enghien's death?" "Well, General if our enemies take atrocious measures against us, we are right to do the same," not perceiving that this was tantamount to saying that the measure was atrocious. The First Consul pretended that the act was dictated by reasons of state. One day, about this time, when he was discussing the plays of Corneille with an intelligent man, he said, "You see, public safety, or—to be more exact—state policy, has assumed for the moderns the meaning that fatality had for the ancients. There are men who by nature would be incapable of crime, but political circumstances force it on them, as if it were a law. In his tragedies Corneille has shown that he understood state policy, and so, if he had lived in my time I would have made him my first minister."

THE FRENCH HAVE a greater need than any other people for a certain degree of freedom of the press; they need to think and feel in common. They need the spark of their neighbours' emotions if they are to experience something themselves, and their enthusiasm never develops in isolation. Therefore, anyone who wishes to become their tyrant would be wise to deny public opinion any form of expression. To this idea—common to all despots—Bonaparte adds a trick peculiar to this period: the art of spreading factitious opinions in newspapers which appear to be free, when in fact they are written under orders.

A RATHER DISTINGUISHED MAN OF LETTERS—*but the kind of philosopher who always finds philanthropic reasons for being satisfied with the powers that be—said to a friend of mine, "It is so admirable—the simplicity with which the Emperor allows anything to be said to him! The other day I spent a whole hour proving to him the absolute necessity of basing the new dynasty on a charter which would assure the nation's rights."*

"And what did he reply?" he was asked.

"He clapped me on the shoulder with perfect good humour, and told me, 'You are quite right, my dear Senator, but trust me, this is not the moment for it.'" And this senator, like many others, was quite satisfied with himself for having spoken out, even though his opinion was totally ignored. To the French, the requirements of self-esteem are more important by far than those of character.

A peculiarity of the French that Bonaparte has analysed with extraordinary shrewdness is that they, so clever at ridiculing others, ask nothing better than to be ridiculous themselves the moment their vanity can profit by it. Indeed, nothing invites greater ridicule than the creation of an entirely new nobility such as the one which Bonaparte established to support his new throne. The princesses and queens, yesterday's citizenesses, could not even keep from laughing upon hearing themselves called "Your Highness." Others, more serious, delighted in having their title "Your Lordship" repeated from morning to night, like Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. *Old archives were searched for the best documents on etiquette; worthy men set about gravely composing coats of arms for the new families; in short, no day passed without some situation worthy of Molière arising.*

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much older than her eldest son, she established a calmer *modus vivendi*. Each time, the man, after being genuinely bewitched, would try to escape and Mme de Staël would pursue him with inflammatory missives until the love relationship had been destroyed. No wonder she was so keen on performing in amateur performances of Racine's tragedies! There was clearly something wrong, since so many men came and went. The explanation may be that Mme de Staël was both overpowering in herself and an extreme case of father-fixation. She could find no adequate male counterpart to exorcise Daddy; she blasted men out of her life, because they were incapable of subduing her, although she would no doubt have liked to be subdued. In her relationship with Rocca, who was ardent but tubercular and partly crippled by a war wound, she became a mother-figure and the union lasted until her death.

In the document attesting her secret marriage with Rocca in 1816, she states rather tactlessly: "I have known no man in this world equal to my father." As early as 1804, in her memorial essay, *Du caractère de M. Necker et de sa vie privée*, written just after her father's death, she makes two remarks which she could not have penned so

Madame de Staël

THERE WAS NOT A MONARCH in Europe who would have committed—in an entire year—the arbitrary insolences which marked his every day. He came to offer them—in exchange for their peace of mind, their independence, their language, their laws, their wealth, their blood, and their children—shame, and the misfortune of being destroyed as nations and despised as men. In other words, he was implementing a plan for universal monarchy, the greatest scourge with which mankind can be threatened and the certain cause of perpetual war.

None of the arts of peace suits Bonaparte; he takes pleasure only in violent crises produced by battle. He has known how to make truces, but he has never sincerely said, *"Enough."* His character, at war with the rest of creation, is like the Greek flame, which no force of nature could extinguish.

I SPENT MY DAYS *studying the map of Europe in order to flee, just as Napoleon studied it in order to make himself its master, and my campaign—like his—always had Russia as its objective. That country was the last refuge for oppressed people; which was why it had to be the country the conqueror of Europe wanted to destroy.*

And why was he tormenting me in this way? To make me publish praises of him; and what good would these praises do him, among the thousands constantly offered him out of fear and hope? Bonaparte once said, "if I had the choice of doing a good deed myself or inducing my adversary to commit a base act, I would not hesitate to choose the debasement of my enemy".

NOT ONLY FRENCH CITIZENS but even foreigners were warned to shun my house. The Prefect remained on guard to prevent even old friends from seeing me again. One day, for instance, his official exertions deprived me of the company of a German gentleman whose conversation I found extremely agreeable, and on this occasion I told him that he might well have spared himself this search for ways to persecute me. "What!" he replied. "I did that to help you. I made your friend understand that he would compromise you by coming to your house." I could not help laughing at this ingenious argument. "Yes," he continued with the utmost seriousness, "the Emperor, seeing loyalty to you placed above loyalty to him, would be annoyed with you."

"So," I replied, "the Emperor expects my personal friends—and soon perhaps even my children—to abandon me in order to gratify him. That seems rather too much. Besides," I added, "I do not quite see how a person in my situation can be compromised. What you say reminds me of a revolutionary at the time of the Terror, to whom a plea was made that he try to save one of his friends from the scaffold. 'I would be afraid of harming him,' he answered, 'by speaking in his favour.'" The Prefect smiled at my quotation, but continued the arguments which, backed as they were by four hundred thousand bayonets, invariably seem completely sound.

ANOTHER KIND OF TERROR *assailed me. I was afraid that when the Emperor heard of my departure he would publish one of those articles he dictates so well when he wants to commit a moral assassination. A senator once told me that Napoleon was the best journalist he knew. Certainly, if journalism is the art of slandering individuals and nations, he possesses it to a supreme degree. Nations can survive such treatment; but he has acquired—in the revolutionary times through which he has lived—a certain flair for defamatory statements calculated to appeal to vulgar minds and to circulate among those whose wit consists entirely of repeating phrases published by the government for their express use. If the* Moniteur *accused someone of having committed highway robbery, no newspaper—French, German or Italian —would dare print that person's vindication. Words cannot describe what a man who heads an army of a million soldiers and has a billion in revenues is like; who has all the prisons of Europe at his disposal, with kings as his jailers; and uses the press as his mouthpiece, while his victims are scarcely permitted to make a reply even in an intimate circle of friends; in short, a man who can make even misfortune look ridiculous. How execrable is that power, and the ironic enjoyment of it which is the final insult satanic genius can inflict on the human race!*

Whatever one's independence of character, I do not believe it possible not to tremble at the prospect

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unselfconsciously had she lived in the post-Freudian era, and which throw a retrospective light on the barely concealed hostility between herself and her mother. She refers to her father's youth as "that time when I could picture him as being so young, so attractive and so lonely! the time when our destinies might have been united for good, had fate made us contemporaries. . . ." A second reference repeats the same idea in different terms: "I was to lose . . . my protector, my father, my brother, my friend, the man whom I would have chosen as the sole affection of my life, had fate not cast me into a different generation from his." Her marriage to the Baron de Staël was a purely arranged union, and she noted at the time that her intended did not have a very exciting personality. Perhaps she accepted him partly because she sensed him to be more of a cipher than a husband and, at that early stage, did not realise her true need. According to a later, but undated, diary-jotting (quoted by a descendant, Comtesse de Pange), she admitted to herself that the marriage had been a mistake and wished she had done better:

> I regret not having united my destiny with a great man; it is the only glory for a woman on this earth, but it raises her to the level of him she loves.

We may wonder if she was thinking nostalgically of Napoleon. It seems to be well established that he was the only person in whose presence she ever felt abashed. In the *Considérations*, she devotes an admirable chapter to her first impressions of him, and frankly states that she thought him unique, in spite of her "unconquerable aversion" to his coolly calculating mind. She is reported as having said to Lucien Bonaparte:

> I become stupid in your brother's presence, because I want so much to please him. I don't know what happens, I want to talk to him, I try out various turns of phrase, I want to force him to take notice of me. In short, I feel, and become, as stupid as a goose.

Since neither kings, queens nor literary geniuses ever had such an effect upon her, it is possible that this fluttering of the heart might, in rather different circumstances, have changed into devotion.

IT IS ANOTHER of the ironies of history that the one contemporary male with a more powerful organisation than her own, the one man she could be in awe of, as she had been slightly in awe of her father, should have remained beyond her reach. Hence, no doubt, her tempestuous and unsatisfactory relationships with lesser men, such as Talleyrand, Narbonne, and Constant. As it turned out, all three of them became Napoleon's creatures, at least for a time. She did not get him, but he got her lovers; on the other hand, he did not get her on the political level, where she would have been useful. Although she petitioned Napoleon for the right to remain in France, the tone in which she wrote to him is firmer, more virile, than the tone used by her father when he appealed to the dictator on her behalf.

It has never been proved that she weakened. Napoleon could give Talleyrand, Narbonne, and Constant position and material advantages; he could not give Mme de Staël the personal attention and consideration she wished for, since he instinctively recoiled from her; and he was unwilling to allow her to live in Paris and speak

& Napoleon (II)

of arousing the hostility of such a power. At least I admit to having experienced this feeling myself.

HALFWAY BETWEEN KIEV AND MOSCOW **we were already near Napoleon's troops and I thought, trembling, about this army that might overtake me at the very limits of Europe and make my position both tragic and ridiculous. For that is what happens when one fails in an enterprise of this kind: not understanding the circumstances that had forced me into it, people would have wondered why I had left my home—even though it had been made my prison—and some, with the best of intentions, would not have failed to say with an air of compunction, that it was indeed fortunate, but that I would have done better to stay where I was. If tyranny had only its direct followers on its side, it could never maintain itself. The astonishing thing, and the one most revealing of human weakness, is that most ordinary men are accepting of events; they lack the ability to look beyond immediate facts, and when an oppressor has triumphed and a victim is ruined, they hasten to justify—not exactly the tyrant—but the destiny whose instrument he is. Weakness of mind and character no doubt causes this servility, but there is also a certain need in human nature for saying that fate is right, whatever it may be, as if this were a way of living at peace with it.**

EMPEROR ALEXANDER *very shrewdly described to me the impression the conversations with Bonaparte had had on him, in which Bonaparte said the most contradictory things, as if each statement were so amazing on its own that one would never realise they were contradictory. He also told me about the lessons in Machiavellism that Napoleon had seen fit to give him. "You see," Napoleon said to Alexander, "I am careful to keep my ministers and my generals at odds with each other, so that they will reveal each other's faults to me. I maintain continual jealousy by the way I treat my associates. One day one thinks he is the favourite, the next day another, so that no one is ever certain of my favour." What a vulgar, vicious theory! One can only hope that sometime there will be a man superior to this one, who will demonstrate its futility.*

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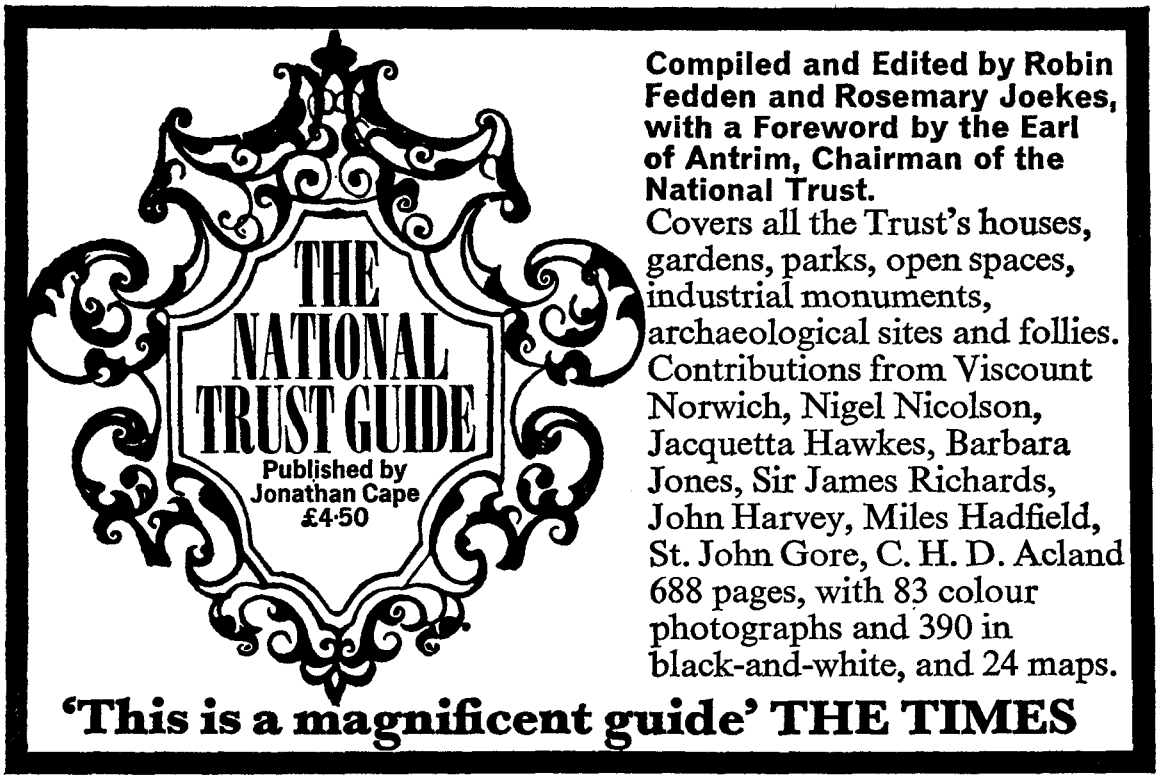
her mind, which was the only other privilege she needed or wanted.

In any case, while she might use the formal language of supplication, she made it quite clear that she was asking not for a privilege, but for what she considered to be a normal right in a healthy society. Being a woman, and being the woman she was, she put the men to shame, in spite of her frequent hysterics.

IT IS IMPORTANT to emphasise that the complicated, untidy background of Mme de Staël's private life, instead of detracting from the value of her political stand, as some critics have implied, on the contrary makes it more admirable.

Curiously enough, while she gives the impression of being baffled by Napoleon, in the sense that she could not understand why so able a man failed to see the light, there is no reason to believe that she was vindictive or looked upon herself as a woman scorned, in relationship to him. That only happened in the case of the men with whom she had been intimate and who disappointed her after giving pledges of love; his record was blameless on that score. But one can only marvel at the fact that a woman who lived in such a passionate turmoil and had such an ungovernable temperament should have managed to rise above her situation to compose coherent and dignified works like *Dix Années d'Exil* and *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*. Even if, as has been argued, there was an element of farce in her final departure on her great anti-Napoleonic journey (she had just had the illegitimate child by young Rocca and was the subject of ironical gossip in Geneva), the journey itself turned into a triumphal progress and her record of it is a piece of permanent, though fragmentary, literature. This record is all the more touching when one knows something about the human circumstances it does not mention. In *Dix Années d'Exil*, Mme de Staël was not writing her confessions, and indeed she never wrote them as such. But the reader has only to turn to her correspondence to see the tensions between the emotional woman and the thinking brain.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Roy Fuller

Kantian Matters

In memoriam Kenneth Allott 1912-73

The years arrive and go and are forgotten.

The tone inevitable elegiac:
As Gilbert Murray said, one cannot write
"And after many a summer dies the duck."

Drinking the wines of '70—absurd.
Poet a century hence, to whom your fellow
Bards have been known to appeal, you're almost here!

And we ourselves have doddered on to odd
Times and must try for urban philistines
To make some sense of prosody and dawns.

Yet my contemporaries are dying round me.
Even those silent since their youth seem gagged
Just as their lips were forming some great message.

And more persistent singers by that token
Look to have cheated death, despite our having
To watch them shrink and whiten in their clothes.

After the bird expired between my palms
And I had buried it, I thought: "You missed
The fireball at nine. And all the ruffling rain."

Who knows which cataclysm is the worst,
Nature's or history's? I see today
Fasces protruding from a lion's jaw—

Thoughtless baroque idea of decorating
The purlieus of learning and high oratory.
It only means brute's triumph over brute.

The State sicks up the violent element
That breeds in its craw. "The old age of certain men
Is like the childhood of immortality."

—Thus the Goncourts. What change has come to life
In a hundred years! How unserene my soul!
Yet the two Kantian matters still remain

For admiration: first, the moral law
Within us; secondly, the stellar sky
Above us—outside our rooms, our self-regard,

That haunt our years and flick them swiftly through.

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George Barker

In Memory of David Archer

To lift a hand
to those who have gone before us
those friends and
oddfellows to whom
only death can restore us
(I have heard
as in day dreams
them calling sometimes for us
out of a silence that seems
like a dead chorus)
to lift a hand in farewell
for them at the black bell
neither you David nor I
found this a hard thing to do—
for they, most of them, died
in a sort of twisted pride
or as they lifted up
the whisky in the cup
or turning a handsome head
in honour among the dead
so that, with the wave
of a hand toward the grave
you and I, as they went
down out of the present,
could seem to call:
"Stand up and speak well
in the empty hall
of heaven or empty hell
for us all."
But, David, I am at
such a loss, such a loss
that I cannot, I can not
lift a hand or a word
as you descend
the under ground
and one way stair
to that dead end
where
the friend is found.
Are you there
now? Dear friend
it does not matter where
you are for better or
worse where you are
there can be there
no more of the withering
belief (O withering arm
and withering leaf!)
or the withering Upas tree
of life,
no more ever again
of that pain.
The decent dirt
David unlike the lovers
will not desert you nor
the grave stone hurt
you but with love convert
you into stone, into
the dust and earth
of which both life and death
know the worth.
The dark streets at night
echoing our tread
seem for a moment bright
with what we said
and what we might
even have done, but the light
and dream of those times
is gone
and it was not done.
The familiar vision faded
and is forgotten in
our failure, so degraded
that ideal by
our delusion, so humiliated
we by what we knew
was both foregone and fated,
that in the end
what you saw, my friend,
was that life itself
was the vision
that you hated.
All the gifts of red
roses and blank
cheques and bed
fellows grew rank
and went bad
and you and they
sank down in the grey
ends of a day
that stank as it died
in the guttering
palace. I think
that all you leave
behind you in the evening
is a darkened room
empty save for old
newspapers and cigarette ends
and in the gloom
the enormous gold
urn of your heart
in which lie the ashes of your friends.

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Donald Davie

His Themes

His themes? Ah yes he had themes.
It was what we all liked about him.
Especially I liked it.
One knew, nearly always one knew
what he was talking about, and he talked
in such a ringing voice.

What did he talk about? What,
just what, were his themes?
Oh, of the most important!

Loss was one of his themes;
he told us, as any bard should,
the story of our people
(tribe), he had memorised
chronologies, genealogies,
the names and deeds of heroes,
the succession of our kings,
our priests, the sept of our pipers,
the mediations . . . and this
while, young and old,
we extolled the immediate, meaning
the unremembering. *Yes,*
and what was his theme? His theme, you said, was . . . ?
Loss. Loss was his theme.

And duty. He taught us our duty;
he taught us, as any
legislator should,
the rules of hygiene, the clean
and the unclean meats, the times and
the means of fumigation,
of strewing and spreading, of fires,
and what to do with the old
and how to dispose of the dead
and how to live with our losses
uncomplaining . . . and this
while, young and old,
we did our best to be free,
meaning unruly. *Yes,*
and what was his theme? What did you say his theme was?
Duty. His theme was duty.

Fear also. Fear was a theme;
he taught us, as all seers must,
continual apprehension:
of one another, of
our womenfolk and our
male children, of
the next clan over the mountains
and of the mountains, also

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the waters, the heavenly bodies
wheeling and colliding,
of the wild beasts both large
and infinitesimal, of
revenants and of the future,
and of the structure of matter
and of the unknown . . . and all this
while, young and old,
we tried to keep our nerve,
meaning, to be heedless. *Yes,*
and what was the theme, did you say, of this voice both hollow and ringing?
Fear. Fear was the theme.

We like to be told these things.
We need to be reminded.

He sounds like a sort of priest.
What was your priesthood doing?

Nonsensical things, like spinning
a shallow great bowl of words
poised on the stick of a question,
pointing it this way and that
for an answering flash, as the bend
of a river may come in a flash
over miles and miles
from a fold in the hills, over miles.

We paid them no attention.

Peter Scupham

Prehistories

I
Adrowse, my pen trailed on, and a voice spoke.
"Now, you must read us Belknap." My book was open.

I knew their faces; there were three of them,
Each with a certain brightness in her eyes.

I would read Belknap. Then a gardener's shears
Snipped fatefully my running thread of discourse.

And in my indices, no poem upon which
I could confer this honorary title.

Foundering in dictionaries and gazetteers,
I came there: Belas Knap, a chambered tomb.

The lips are closed upon that withered barrow:
A dummy portal, a slant lintel hung

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Beneath a scalp of ruinous grass, her walls
A packed mosaic of blurred syllables.

II
Entering is a deployment of small silences,
Frail collusions and participations.

A scrape of some sad traffic on the ear,
Bird-song at her old insouciance,

I pull these down into an underworld
Of images alive in their dark shelter.

Such corridors are tacitly inscribed:
Do not abandon hope here, but desire.

When old men's voices stumble down the lane,
They too must be my dry accompaniment.

There is a shrinking in each new encounter,
A heaviness attendant on the work.

The vanished bone sings in her shallow alcove,
Making a sacred and astounding music.

Ghosts are a poet's working capital.
They hold their hands out from the further shore.

III
The spirit leans her bleak peninsulas:
Our granite words loosen toward the sea,

Or hold, by some wild artifice, at Land's End.
The Merry Maidens dance their come ye all,

Keeping time to the piper's cold slow-motion,
Their arms linked against the lichenous Sabbath.

And a menhir, sharp-set, walled about
By a dirt-farm, a shuffle of lean cows,

Accepts as of right our casual veneration,
All fertile ceremonies of birth and death.

I see you standing, the new life quick in you,
Poised on Chun Quoit into the flying sky.

There, in that grave the wind has harrowed clean,
Our children crouch, clenched in a fist of stone.

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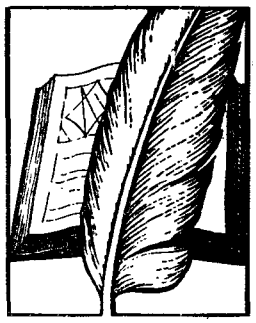

Column

ON ENCOUNTER'S twentieth birthday, it is difficult not to think of the changes that have occurred since its first number appeared. It was a time when, in General Mihailovitch's phrase, "the gale of the world" was blowing very hard indeed; 1953 was a year when to many people it seemed possible, and some people hoped, that not only would Europe die but that all the values she had created in her long and tragic history would die with her.

I myself do not think that was an exaggerated view. Europe had been so exhausted and debilitated by the war, both materially and spiritually, that it was still difficult to see how she could survive it, or any longer provide a home for the European spirit of intelligence, innovation and discovery which had been the source of its past greatness. Nor could it be transported abroad, to New York or Moscow or wherever else might offer its hospitality. There it could only live as a displaced person, a bird in a gilded or an iron cage, an émigré forever looking over its shoulder at what had been left behind. European man, one of the most extraordinary and creative products of evolution and history, has made his abiding resting place in Europe, adorned with all its magnificent memorials of the past yet only alive so long as it has the promise of a future, and it is there that he will live or die. About 1953, there were many who believed that he was there to die, and that all that could be done was embalm the corpse, and bury it as decently as possible. There were also many who were not sorry if this were so, especially those militant spirits mobilised in Europe's great fifth column, the communist parties of the West; they were waiting for the death of Europe.

I do not know how later historians will judge the Europe of twenty years later. Some no doubt will say that the corpse survived after the soul had fled, like a zombie responding mechanically to impulses dictated from outside himself. Looking at Europe today, I do not think this is a very likely hypothesis. Others will say that the soul itself had suffered a fundamental transformation, in which its vices survive and its virtues have vanished. I think this may be possible, though I do not think it is true. And there are even some who would dare to say that Europe in 1973, firmly based on her newly recovered affluence and prosperity, is now ready to be launched into one more dizzy flight into the unknown by which she has always been attracted and from which she has always won her greatest triumphs. I think this is a dream, though it is one I would gladly share.

BUT WHATEVER THE VERDICT, I think that no one would deny that in 1973 Europe still remains a possibility as the breeding-ground of a particular species of human being who may still make the unique contribution to the future that he has done to the past. To hold that possibility open was, in the Europe of 1953, almost more than could be hoped for. Twenty years later the possibility exists, even though we still cannot say that it will become a reality. But for the possibility itself we should be grateful.

ENCOUNTER could not claim to have made a major or decisive contribution to the changes by which Europe has recovered the possibility of existence. In such matters deeds count rather more than words, written or spoken. *How many divisions has the Pope?* is always a sensible question to ask ourselves when we put our trust in the word or the idea. But so far as words and ideas do count, ENCOUNTER, together with its European collaborators, *Der Monat* in Germany, *Preuves* in France, *Tempo Presente* in Italy, can claim to have promoted, to the best of its ability, the defence of European values at a time when they were in danger of being extinguished, to have held open lines of communication, both within Europe and between Europe and the United States, when there were many who would have liked to see them closed, and to have adhered to the principle that, where ideas are concerned, neither the *argumentum ad hominem* nor *ad bacillum* is permissible.

This is not, of course, a position which assures a mass circulation nor which flatters the illusions of crowds. But it is nevertheless a position which has enabled ENCOUNTER to survive successfully for twenty years, and for this perhaps both its readers and its contributors have some reason to congratulate themselves.

I HAVE BEEN READING, with great pleasure and interest, Jean Lacouture's admirable life of André Malraux, recently published in Paris.[1] One could not pay the book a higher compliment than to say that it is worthy, and rises to the level of its subject, whose life, like his work, has been a mirror of his age, even if that mirror has sometimes been a distorting one; the images it has reflected have not, for that reason, been any less dazzling.

[1] *André Malraux: une vie dans le siècle.* By JEAN LACOUTURE. Editions du Seuil.

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Malraux's life coincides exactly with the life of the century; no man has been more a man of his own age or has entered more passionately into its tragedy and into its hopes. M. Lacouture tells us the story of this life in great detail, and also with great objectivity, a considerable feat considering that he has had to rely on three entirely different and frequently conflicting kinds of sources, first the facts, so far as they can be discovered, second the legend which Malraux himself has helped to weave about them, and third their reflection in the mirror of Malraux's novels.

This is not the place to recount the events which, for many people, as for their hero, have become a legend; this can be safely left to M. Lacouture. But there is one incident which has never ceased to fascinate me, and it is worth retelling even if it has been told before, in at least three versions; by Malraux himself, both in fiction, in *La Voie Royale*, and in his *Anti-Mémoires*, which is itself a kind of fiction, by his first wife, Clara Malraux, in her admirable autobiography, *Nos Vingt Ans*, and now by M. Lacouture, who tries to do justice both to fiction and autobiography, which are notoriously undependable sources, and to the verifiable facts.

THE STORY BEGINS with a young married couple, Clara and André Malraux, in the Paris of 1921, still enjoying the benefits of the post-war boom. Both partners to the marriage are highly intelligent and both greedy for the new experiences available in such variety to emancipated young people in the Paris of that time. André, twenty-one, is a poet and a dandy, after the fashion of Baudelaire, and he has the intensity, the looks and the charisma which fascinate Clara, the highly sophisticated twenty-year-old daughter of a rich German-Jewish immigrant family from Magdeburg. André, who likes to make a mystery of his lower middle-class origins, makes his living by supplying booksellers and publishers with rare editions of pornographic books. He also gambles on the stock exchange, with such success that in the inflationary conditions of 1922–23 he is able to whisper in Clara's ear, in the darkness of the cinema, which they both adore, that they are very nearly millionaires.

But alas! André's winnings have been invested in a Mexican gold mine, which had a no more stable existence than a castle in Spain, and one day André has to tell Clara that they are ruined. "But all the same," he adds, "I hope you don't expect me to work." For he has a plan for restoring their fortunes. On the pilgrim's road that led from Flanders to the great mediaeval shrine of St James of Compostella in Spain there was a series of magnificent cathedrals which have been preserved for posterity, but once there must certainly also have been many smaller churches and chapels no less beautiful and no less rich in votive offerings. "What do you mean?" says Clara, who finds it difficult to understand what relevance this has to their ruined fortunes. "Well," says André, "on the royal road that leads from Siam to Angkor-Vat in Cambodia, there are magnificent temples which are today admirably preserved and catalogued. But there must certainly be many smaller ones lost in the jungle which no one has ever seen. So it's quite simple. We go to Indo-China, find a little temple, take its statues, sell them in New York, and live happily on the proceeds for several years."

One of the splendid things about the story is that the young Clara Malraux has no doubt at all that this is a perfectly sensible way of recouping their losses. André, already a connoisseur of Chinese art and a devoted visitor to the Musée Guimet, knows it all; the voyage out, the route, the temple, the equipment required, the dealers to sell to in New York, where prices are high, and it does not occur to her to doubt the genius that lies behind her youthful husband's idea. The young couple sell their last remaining possessions to raise funds for the expedition, take ship to Indo-China, and on a bullock-cart driven by an Annamese servant take the royal road to Angkor-Vat. And there, in the jungle, overgrown, abandoned, they find the temple of their dreams, its walls encrusted with the carvings of the smiling gods and goddesses whose rest has been undisturbed for centuries, and with chisels and saws they cut them from the walls and pack them in the camphor-wood chests they have brought with them, for transport down to the river and shipment to New York.

IT IS A FAIRY TALE COME TRUE. What young couple ever found a more fabulous road to fortune? But alas! in the eyes of the law, the Malraux treasure was, quite simply, loot. The unauthorised export of art from Cambodia was forbidden. At the first port-of-call on the river, French colonial police boarded the Malraux' ship, arrested the happy couple, already congratulating themselves on their success, confiscated their booty, and charged them with the theft of State property.

There the fairy story really ends. But while it lasted it had a marvellous combination of innocence, adventure and crime, the babes-in-the-jungle, treasure-island quality of a children's dream. What followed was a return to reality of a somewhat grim kind, while Clara and André awaited the result of the judicial proceedings against them, at first in the best hotel in Phnom-Penh, then, after their money had given out and Clara had attempted suicide, in hospital, where

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she went on hunger-strike and in a coma heard Malraux whisper to her: "Don't despair. I shall end as a d'Annunzio!"

After her hunger-strike, Clara was declared to have acted under the influence of her husband and permitted to return to Paris, where she energetically organised a campaign of protest against his continued detention. In September 1924, *Nouvelles Littéraires* published a petition for his release, which was signed by some of the most brilliant names in France, including Gide, Mauriac, André Maurois, Edmond Jaloux, Charles Du Bos, Louis Aragon, Jacques Rivière, Max Jacob, André Breton. Malraux himself, quoting the petition a few months later, added the name of Anatole France to the list of signatories.

In October 1924, Malraux received a year's suspended sentence and returned to Paris.

Malraux, however, also brought something else back with him which was to have more lasting effects; that is to say, an identification with the cause of the people of Indo-China in their struggle against white colonialism. The sequel to his visit to Cambodia was that, after a few months in Paris, he took ship to Saigon, there to help found and co-edit a newspaper, *L'Indochine*, dedicated to the cause of anti-colonialism in Indo-China. The paper did not survive for long, but his experiences as its editor provided Malraux with his only direct contact with the Chinese revolutionary movement. He was never, for instance, as is generally believed, and as he himself later claimed in a letter to Edmund Wilson, "a commissar of the Kuomintang in Indo-China and later in Canton."

Malraux's early experiences in Indo-China form a curious and fascinating introduction to his fabulous career. Who would have guessed that the young aesthete and dandy who set out in 1923 to loot a Khmer temple would one day end, *via* the Spanish civil war and the French underground, as a Gaullist Minister of Culture?

*

I AM SORRY TO SAY that Encounter games are not something like *Times* crossword puzzles or *New Statesman* competitions which have been devised to amuse this magazine's readers. They are, in intention at least, rather more serious than that, being both a form of psychological therapy and a form of big business, with 750,000 customers in the United States and a turnover of millions of dollars a year.

A fascinating account of them is given in *The Encounter Game*, by Bruce L. Maliver, Ph.D.,[2] a qualified American psychologist. Although it is full of interesting information I still find it rather difficult to explain what encounter therapy is because, like other forms of psychological treatment, it is rather weak on the side of theory, and offers little of interest in the way of doctrine, especially any doctrine which can be empirically or experimentally verified.

The best I can say by way of enlightenment is that encounter games rest on the belief that there are levels of experience which we have suppressed from consciousness with the result that we live in a state of emotional deprivation which is the source of profound unhappiness. Even worse, perhaps, it may affect our business efficiency and thus reduce the Gross National Product. In order to relieve this disastrous condition we must "get in touch with our feelings", "experience heightened awareness" and "get rid of hang-ups". The language of encounter games is a warning of what kind of world we are about to enter. But the distinctive feature of encounter games is that we can only cure ourselves of our unhappiness through group experience, in which we directly play out to and for each other those subliminal feelings and sensations which are the source of our discontents. Not for the Encounter patient the introspective isolation of the psychiatrist's couch; we need to join with others in crying, screaming, shouting, shrieking aloud the consuming passions by which we are devoured because we deny them, and to shrieks and cries we need to add physical contact with the members of one's encounter group, touching a breast here, a thigh there, or making whatever contact is needed to achieve the release of repressed emotion. To the question, *What must I do to be saved?*, the answer is quite simply that you must express yourself and everything else shall be added unto you.

It is rather dismaying to discover that in the United States such a diagnosis of our emotional discomforts should have won the support, not merely of large business corporations, but of government agencies, school authorities, and drug rehabilitation centres, though no doubt public money is needed if encounter games are to reach the poor, as a two week course, or "workshop" can cost $450 a head. I do not expect any general improvement in the level of mental health in the United States as a result of such expenditure. But there is one group to which I think encounter treatment might be well adapted, and that is the staff of the White House. They might as well get rid of their suppressed emotional drives on each other as on the unfortunate citizens of the United States.

[2] *The Encounter Game*. By BRUCE L. MALIVER, Ph.D. Stein & Day, $7.75.

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All good wishes to **Encounter** on its 20th birthday. We are pleased to have assisted in its creation. Since that date we have added these authors to our list:

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The Recantation of Henry Redhead Yorke

A Forgotten English Ideologist—By MELVIN J. LASKY

I HAVE received a number of challenging letters from historical scholars, here and abroad, which take issue with some of the evidence and a few of the conclusions I offered in my two recent articles on "The English Ideology" (ENCOUNTER, Dec. 72–Jan. 73). Was the devotion to moderation, prudence, and gradual reform so exclusive? Was there not a genuine revolutionary Left on the far extremes of the English political and intellectual scene? And would this not at least indicate that all men are equal before the revolutionary temptation, and that neither the nature of the English language nor the evolving national temperament could upset the universality of the dream of utopia and revolution? But even if this were so, the very isolation and lonely futility throughout modern English history of the handful of revolutionary ideologues, unable to rally an intellectual élite which could conceivably deepen existing social conflicts, would surely suggest how difficult, if not impossible, it was for certain images and ideas to take root and to grow in such uncongenial soil. Nevertheless, I felt sufficiently prompted to return to the literature of the 1790s, especially the great State Trials held in the shadow of the French Revolution, and to search for figures and configurations which might further illuminate the peculiarity of the English Ideology. I must confess that on second reading of the historical sources a number of worthwhile things emerged, particularly in connection with the almost forgotten life and work of Henry Redhead Yorke, perhaps the most flamboyant figure agitating in the wings of the English political stage.

If, as I have been arguing, the English radical reformers were in no sense genuine revolutionaries, this is not to say that they were not visionaries or, to use Henry Yorke's phrase, men of "Utopian artistry." One passage, written by two of the more militant spirits of the day (Maurice Margarot and Thomas Hardy, in August 1792), is worth rescuing from the volumes of the State Trials as an example of how even so sober an institution as representative government, so humdrum in its ideological appeal for centuries now, once had the charm of a Parliamentary Utopia.

> . . . Too visible are the numerous encroachments on our rights, too common the insolence of office, the venality of magistracy, the perversion of the laws, the letting loose the military on every occasion, and those occasions eagerly sought. The subject's complaints derided—the one part of the nation turned into spies and informers against the other—the—but wherefore more? Is here not enough to prove beyond a doubt, that while we boast the best constitution, the mildest laws, the freest government, we are in fact slaves!
>
> Yet, fellow-citizens! Numerous as are our grievances, and close rivetted and weighty the shackles on our freedom; reform one alone, and the others will all disappear. . . .
>
> Soon then should we see our liberties restored, the press free, the laws simplified, judges unbiased, juries independent, needless places and pensions retrenched, immoderate salaries reduced, the public better served, taxes diminished, and the necessaries of life more within the reach of the poor, youth better educated, prisons less crowded, old age better provided for, and sumptuous feasts at the expense of the starving poor less frequent. Look not upon this, dear countrymen, as an enthusiastic vision; but rather let us together take a calm and reasonable review of such an honest parliament assembled. . . .[1]

The vision, then, was not of a good and perfect society, but of a better social order; the utopia was, if you will, calm and reasonable rather than total and ecstatic. Indeed, after almost two hundred years, during which time social and economic conditions have been vastly transformed, this programme could be repeated and put out as the relevant manifesto for most reforming political parties in the West at the present day! The forms of hope—or, perhaps, the structure of what I have called the Utopian longing—would appear to have remained a constant among all

[1] *The Trial of Thomas Hardy for High Treason* (Sessions House in the Old Bailey, 28 October–5 November 1794), in *State Trials* (ed. Howell, 1818), p. 385.

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the vaunted changes and progress of European-American civilisation.

I SHOULD LIKE to re-emphasise, with a few additional details, the distinction between the occasional English outbursts of radical impatience and romantic fury and the steady consistent efforts of the English ideologists to remain on a course of reform and not revolution.

Thus, a reformer of extremist temperament like John Thelwall could boast that he belonged to "the only avowed Sans Culottes in the metropolis" and could feel pride that they "fear me as much as they hate." To one of his correspondents he made the chiding remark: "I fear you are somewhat short of the true Sans Culotte liberty . . . you have too much veneration for property, too much religion, and too much law."

If Thelwall was to the left of his correspondents, most of the other London leaders tried to restrain what they considered to be unfortunate and thoughtless outbursts of extremism. Some of it was only rhetorical. Thus, Hardy kept on receiving letters from enthusiasts who would conclude: "Farewell, hoping that the hydra of tyranny and imposition shall soon fall under the guillotine of truth and reason. . . . " This brought them under the suspicion—among fellow-reformers as well as government observers—of preparing their cadres to be Jacobinical keepers of the public safety ("the safety of the People is the Supreme, and in cases of necessity the *only* law"), indeed that they would only be substituting the Royal hangman's rope for a republican blade.[2]

Again, a correspondent writes to Thomas Hardy (17 Sept. 1792): "Would not all the evil be done away at once by the people assembled in convention? . . ." Why must changes be slow and gradual? Why couldn't there be one clean sweep? A Norwich radical group, puzzled by the discrete or timid ambiguities of the "moderate reform" programme—"covered with a sort of obscurity in its language"—inquired of Thomas Hardy (11 November 1793) whether the London groups would really "rest satisfied with the Duke of Richmond's plan only; or whether it is their private design to rip up monarchy by the roots, and place democracy in its stead. . . . " They also indicated that they wanted to adopt the old name of "the Revolution Society."[3]

Maurice Margarot hastened to reply on behalf of the London Corresponding Society. Titles were of little moment; it was "a matter of small importance whatever name you choose to adopt." More important was that if they divided themselves in cellular fashion, "into small societies, each of which to choose a delegate", at the end a representative committee should emerge. But this was the central message and warning:

> But, above all . . . let no dispute be carried to excess; leave monarchy, democracy, and even religion, entirely aside; never dispute on these topics. . . . The committee offer you every assistance in their power, but request that your questions may relate chiefly to the methods of obtaining a reform in parliament. Like yourselves, they are friends to peace [*i.e.* opponents of the war against France] . . . and well-wishers to the rights of man; yet not so sanguine in their expectations as to imagine those rights will be restored by the spontaneous consent of those who have so long been deprived of them. . . . (*Hardy Trial*, p. 394).

This was the characteristic caution of sceptical liberal reformers who knew the simple-minded optimism of the militance they had to encounter. Thomas Erskine made much of Margarot's reply to the Norwich query, and he reformulated it in his historic peroration for the defence so unambiguously that it certainly must have helped sway the jury to acquit Thomas Hardy (as it would John Horne Tooke, for much the same reasons).

> The Attorney General says, this is lamely expressed. —I, on the other hand, say, that it is not only not lamely expressed, but anxiously worded to put an end to dangerous speculations.—Leave all theories undiscussed;—do not perplex yourselves with abstract questions of government;—endeavour practically to get honest representatives,—and if they deceive you—then, what?—bring on a revolution?—No!—Choose others in their stead. (*Hardy Trial*, p. 934).

This formula for reform was, as I have been arguing, on its way to becoming a central article of faith in the English ideology.

Of Heroes, Words, Images

PERHAPS WHAT WAS MISSING was a messianic confidence in the heroic masses. The idea of the People as Hero, or the whole nation as the collective protagonist of the revolutionary drama, became widespread in France where it was supplemented by the self-serving notion that the new leaders would also take on heroic mould. But in England it had to serve inadequately as a substitute for the immemorial stature of traditional heroes. "The present appears to me," the poet William Cowper wrote in 1789, "a wonderful period in the history of mankind. . . ." But he was also candid enough to observe, as he looked up from the manuscripts of his translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, ". . . Though to say the truth, I am much better qualified to write an essay on the siege of Troy than to descant on any of these modern revolutions. I question if, in either of the

[2] *The Trial of John Horne Tooke* (ed. Blanchard, 1795), Vol. I, pp. 294–5, 348.
[3] *Tooke Trial*, p. 220; *Hardy Trial*, p. 393.

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countries just mentioned [*i.e.* France and the Austrian Netherlands], full of bustle and tumult as they are, there be a single character whom Homer, were he living, would deign to make his hero. The populace are the heroes now, and the stuff of which gentlemen heroes are made seems to be all expended. . . ."

When Cowper subsequently vented his outrage and disgust at the violent deeds of the modern French would-be heroes (as if no blood ever flowed in Homeric action), he remarked; ". . . I cannot tell you the joy I feel at the disappointment of the French [quarrels among the Girondists and Jacobins, the defeat of Dumouriez and the retreat from Holland]. They were all pitiful mimics of Spartan and Roman virtue, without a grain of it in their whole character. . . ."[4]

He went on, in these lines from a poem of his entitled "Heroism", to praise more humdrum native virtues:

Oh, place me in some heav'n-protected isle,
Where peace, and equity, and freedom smile;
Where no volcano pours his fiery flood,
No crested warrior dips his plume in blood;
Where pow'r secures what industry has won;
Where to succeed is not to be undone;
A land that distant tyrants hate in vain,
In Britain's isle, beneath a George's reign!

Ultimately, it would appear, Cowper turned against the very notion of heroes, old or new, all with their "puny hands . . . and baby minds." It reminds one of Brecht's famous lines in our own time, which bitterly identified heroic ages with periods of public unhappiness ("*Happy is the land that has no need of heroes. . . .*")

Great princes have great playthings. Some have play'd
At hewing mountains into men, and some
At building human wonders mountain-high. . . .
Some seek diversion in the tented field,
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.
But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well
T'extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy the world.[5]

The moments were few and far between when a "volcanic" sentiment, a "fiery" phrase or a hint of blood, could be discerned. A resolution of 10 January 1794, by invoking the fate of George Jeffreys (1645–1689) who had delivered the harsh sentences on Titus Oates, Algernon Sidney, and others, could possibly be taken to suggest the violence implicit in political fury.

> Resolved, That law ceases to be an object of obedience, whenever it becomes an instrument of oppression.
>
> Resolved, That we recall to mind, with the deepest satisfaction, the merited fate of the infamous Jeffreys, once Lord Chief Justice of England, who, at the era of the glorious Revolution, for the many iniquitous sentences which he had passed, was torn to pieces by a brave and injured people.
>
> Resolved, That those who imitate his example deserve his fate.

But it was subsequently explained that the violence was only "metaphorical." Jeffreys had not, in fact, been "torn to pieces." After the flight of King James II, Jeffreys attempted his own escape, but was recognised and arrested, narrowly avoiding death at the hands of an angry tavern crowd. He was imprisoned in the Tower and died there, awaiting trial.[6]

THERE WAS AN INCIDENT at the very first anniversary celebration of the French Revolution which foreshadowed the divergences and the defections to come. It was held at the Crown and Anchor in London, on 14 July 1790, and the Earl of Stanhope was in the chair. There was a spirit of "rejoicing" at the meeting, and it was upset only after a resolution had been introduced which seemed to some to be "an unqualified motion and approbation of the French revolution. . . ." John Horne Tooke, for one, thought "it might produce an ill effect out of doors." He recognised that "the form of government in France [was] so foul and decayed, that no repair merely could save it from destruction"; but that the English constitution, with important and necessary reforms, was quite serviceable. The effect was tumultuous; much of the disapprobation was rude and disorderly. A friend of Tooke tried to qualify the qualification, but Tooke in turn (as he quipped) "moderated the moderator." The Earl of Stanhope managed to restore order, and later recalled the scene:

> . . . he [John Horne Tooke] proposed, as an amendment, that something should be added about our own constitution, and he spoke something about ships and timbers . . . I recollect an expression he used, which was that "all our timbers were sound", and he was very much hissed and hooted indeed for it. . . . It was with some difficulty I could procure Mr Tooke a hearing, for they seemed very angry . . . I don't know whether I could have got him a hearing if I had not done something disrespectful. . . .

The chairman suggested that they hear him first and hiss him afterwards. ". . . and then they did hear him . . . and the substance of it was, that we did not want a revolution in this country. . . ."

[4] *The Correspondence of William Cowper* (ed. Wright, 1904), vol. 3, pp. 408–11; vol. 4, p. 391.
[5] *Cowper's Poems* (ed. Fausset, 1931), p. 66; "The Task", p. 387.
[6] See: H. M. Hyde, *Judge Jeffreys* (1940); and *The Trial of John Horne Tooke*, vol. I, p. 247.

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THERE WERE EVEN faction-fights about linguistic tactics, about the propriety of proud and orthodox terminology and the necessity of holding to native and persuasive phraseology. Various local partisans could not agree on the wording of their resolutions, nor even on the word to be used for their national conclave—Convention or Meeting. The quarrel was actually about the choice of etymological roots: "meeting" deriving from Old English, and "convention" from the Latin *conventio*. It was felt by some that the latter, now tinged with Paris politics, "might give offence to weak minds. . . . Upon which the Latin word was put out and the Saxon word stood."[7]

In Scotland, sturdier souls even dared to use at least one dangerous word, as they called delegates from the Societies of the Friends of the People to a first general Convention in Edinburgh. To judge from the published minutes of the meeting (11–13 December 1792),[8] a good deal of the time was taken up by subsequent differences over words and phrases. A *Convention* it was, in true reverence for the French model; but could it accept, without taking on the risk of treason, a resolution which went so far as to say: "Not by a *calm* contented secret wish for reform, but by openly, actively, and urgently *willing* it, with the unit and energy of an embodied nation. . . . "?

Thomas Muir argued that "our great business is to reform, not to alter. . . . " A critic went further and, objecting to "*restore*", proposed the word "*establish.*" Muir objected to "*strike at the root of*", which might be another clause to be construed into treason. Skirving wanted to omit "*restore*" and insert "*obtain.*" A country delegate suggested the word "*remove*" instead of "*strike at the root of.*" But he was countered by a proposal to use "*sweep away*" instead of "*removal.*"

The issue began to narrow down between the protagonists of the progressive future and of the once-glorious past; a strong faction insisted on "*obtain*", which at least smacked of something new, rather than "*restore*" which suggested an ancient purity which probably never was. An equally adamant group contended "that no word in the English language was so proper as 'restore'; that if any other word such as 'obtain' or 'establish' was adopted, we might justly be accused of *innovation*. . . . "

Was there no reformer about who would dare the revolution of the new—the idea of it, the word for it? What had happened to the old radical Puritan temperament which had so naturally opted for "root-and-branch" changes? Who was there to argue, as uncompromising fundamentalist spirits had in the previous century, for a new man in a new world? Was there no task in any sense of the word "fundamental"?

> Mr Muir said that he was not willing to dispute about words, or to spend the time of the Convention in mere verbal criticism, although the metaphor of "removing a source" did not quite please him. But gentlemen would do well to attend to the inferences that might be drawn from such a mode of expression. "What is the source of these abuses?—The royal influence. What! Are you going to remove the King? . . ."

In the end Muir congratulated all for having "entered into the *minutiae* of everything, and scrutinised every syllable before they gave it their consent." After so much care, so much prudence, they allowed themselves one carefree moment at the finale, when all took the French oath, *To live free or die. . . .*

> The whole Convention as one man rose, and, holding up their right hands, took the oath. (Reiterated plaudits.)

But the stormier spirits on the French side of the Channel could never be so quietly contained. As Lamartine once suggested, his countrymen had combined radical politics with "the philosophy of the tempest." And this, as I have contended, had nothing to do with the natural conceits of an island people. As an English poet put it:

> *But shipwreck, earthquake, battle, fire, and flood,*
> *Are mighty mischiefs, not to be withstood;*
> *And honest merit stands on slipp'ry ground,*
> *Where covert guile and artifice abound.*
> *Let just restraint, for public peace design'd,*
> *Chain up the wolves and tigers of mankind. . . .*

And, again, making the metaphorical point more generally:

> *Man, on the dubious waves of error toss'd,*
> *His ship half founder'd, and his compass lost,*
> *Sees, far as human optics may command,*
> *A sleeping fog, and fancies it dry land:*
> *Spreads all his canvas, ev'ry sinew plies;*
> *Pants for 't, aims at it, enters it, and dies!*
> *Then farewell all self-satisfying schemes,*
> *His well-built systems, philosophic dreams;*
> *Deceitful views of future bliss, farewell!*
> *He reads his sentence at the flames of hell.*[9]

On the Left Bank

NEVERTHELESS, under the pressure of scepticism, I turned for glimpses of the extremist temperament in action to the British colony in Paris during the excited years after the fall of the Bastille. This was, perhaps, the first fully-grown European expression of what Hans Magnus Enzensberger has recently called

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[7] *Tooke Trial*, vol. II, pp. 83–85; vol. I, p. 418; vol. II, pp. 142–3.

[8] Appendix A, in Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (1912), pp. 239–273.

[9] *Cowper's Poems*, pp. 258, 220.

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Revolutions-Tourismus (although, as H. R. Trevor-Roper's essay in these pages suggested, the "Three Foreigners in the English Revolution", *i.e.* Hartlib, Dury, and Comenius, might well be considered 17th-century predecessors).[10] The new tourists came to France for the sights and sounds of revolution, for the spectacle of the earth renewing itself; they came to experience days that were shaking the world, to pay their personal tribute to terrible beauties being born. Some had well-built systems, and others philosophic dreams. Here, in the spirit of Dr Richard Price's Revolution Society, English and French enthusiasm appeared to find common ground.

Indeed, nowhere was the Anglo-French fraternity of radical ideologues more direct—and as personally ill-fated in proportion to its political intimacy—than in the capital city of the Revolution itself. There was a large British colony in Paris, and the *sympathisants* constituted a strange and impressive lot of idealists, romantics, adventurers, eccentrics, heroic fools and self-sacrificing humanitarians. They revered the Englishmen upon whom had been conferred French citizenship, among them Dr Priestley, Thomas Paine, Jeremy Bentham, Dr Wilberforce and James Mackintosh. They toasted, at the British Revolutionary Club's meetings, "the Lady Defenders of the Revolution", including Mrs Anna Laetitia Barbauld. Carlyle caught them all in a phrase: "They came with hot unutterabilities in their heart, as pilgrims towards a miraculous shrine. . . ."[11]

One brought with him from Manchester a bust of the martyred Algernon Sidney. Another was supposed to have fallen in love with Théroigne de Méricourt, the Paris courtesan turned Bastille stormer.[12] A third (Benjamin Vaughan, a wealthy M.P., who died in America and bequeathed a fine library to Harvard University) alternated between a work on Benjamin Franklin and, having been "smitten with the craze of Revolution", a treatise on how the Book of Daniel was being fulfilled. (The 19th-century historian of *Englishmen in the French Revolution* observes, with theological dryness: "A Unitarian should have escaped the prophecy interpretation mania, but the Revolution upheaval turned merchants into fanatics and rationalists into mystics. . . .")[13]

All were enthused and purposeful, and each had an idea of his own on how to help the grand cause. Bentham sent a copy of his book on prisons to the Paris revolutionaries, suggesting that he come over and establish a prison on his own system (even offering to stay on as keeper); but the revolutionary prisons were to be run on other principles. John Oswald, a young Edinburgh poet, became a member of the Jacobin Club, was appointed commandant of a battalion of pikemen, found time to translate Collot d'Herbois, established a political magazine called *Chronique du Mois*, and dispensed with cravat and wig to wear his hair *à la Titus*. He was less consistent in his vegetarianism (a Brahmin influence from his year in India), for although he thought it cruel to take an innocent animal's life he argued that bloodshed was necessary to the success of the Revolution. In fact one drastic suggestion of his achieved some notoriety, namely the revolutionary effectiveness of putting to death every suspected man in France. To which Thomas Paine cuttingly replied, "Oswald, you have lived so long without tasting flesh that you have a most voracious appetite for blood. . . ."[14]

Some, like George Grieve (the younger brother of the high sheriff of Northumberland), enjoyed necessarily abrupt careers as terrorists. Grieve became famous as the hunter of Madame

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[10] H.M. Enzenberger, "Revolutions-Tourismus", in *Kursbuch* (No. 30, Berlin, Dec. 1972). H. R. Trevor-Roper, "Three Foreigners and the Philosophy of the English Revolution", ENCOUNTER (Feb. 1960), reprinted in *Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (1967).

[11] John G. Alger, *Englishmen in the French Revolution* (1889).

[12] For a brief portrait of Théroigne, see my "Ladies on the Barricade", ENCOUNTER (July 1972), pp. 22–27.

[13] An Edinburgh editor has left us with another example of the mixture of religious drama, theological mysticism and, in this case, a kind of childish sense of the occult which can accompany the high moments of an ideological crisis. Writing in his *Tait's Magazine* of the famous trial of the young Scottish radical, Thomas Muir, in August 1793, William Tait has recorded the following:

> "A friend of ours, then a child, and bred among the most noted of the Reformers of the period, gives a lively idea of the general state of feeling in Edinburgh, by recording his own notions. The day of the trial, or of the sentence, was thundery and exceedingly dark, and the rain fell in torrents. There was but one topic, one interest—Muir, and the trial; and every one had gone to witness it. A *Trial* was beyond the comprehension of our friend; but, gazing through the window, he felt that some awful thing was acting by wicked men; that some terrible catastrophe was impending, like the Crucifixion or the Judgment Day, to which the dismal weather bore token, and in which the fate of Muir was somehow involved. Our young friend was only reassured by the sensible reflection, that this could not be the Day of Judgment, as the Jews, for whose conversion his Puritan grandfather regularly petitioned in his family prayers, were not yet converted and 'brought in with the fulness of the Gentile nations'."

Memoirs and Trials of the Political Martyrs of Scotland, Persecuted during the Years 1793 *and* 1794, *viz. Thomas Muir . . . Maurice Margarot* (1837), p. 9n.

[14] "John Oswald", in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 14 (1909), pp. 1221–22; Henry Redhead Yorke, *Travels in France* (2 vols., 1814), vol. 1, p. 162.

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Dubarry, and he boasted of having brought at least 17 persons to the guillotine. He liked to sign himself: "Man of Letters, *officieux* defender of the brave *sans-culottes* of Louveciennes, friend of Franklin and Marat, factious (*factieux*) anarchist of the first water, and disorganiser of despotism for twenty years in both hemispheres. . . ." He quarrelled with Jacques Roux, the Jacobin ex-priest, and denounced him as Charlotte Corday's accomplice. No less proficient in denunciations was J.J. (John James, which became Jean-Jacques in admiration for Rousseau) Arthur who, as a close collaborator of Robespierre in the Paris Commune, was on the list of witnesses against Danton; he fell during Thermidor, guillotined at the age of 33.

VISITING REVOLUTIONARIES, not unlike the native breed, appear to maintain a spirit of fraternity or even a semblance of organisational unity for only the briefest of periods. A committee of 49 met at the Hotel d'Angleterre on Sunday, 18 November 1792, to draft and sign a manifesto of common faith. Its second meeting, some weeks later, was also its last. Not even the senior presence of Thomas Paine could keep the quarrelsome factions from splitting and seceding. The not altogether unfamiliar lines of the split would seem to indicate some basic structural weakness in the ideological edifice—the crack comes between the loyalty to revolution in one country and the outgoing devotion to international liberation.

Can a revolution be made permanent in only a single country, or isn't the very essence of the historic mission (and indeed even the national security of the first new régime) a larger world-wide matter beyond all formal frontiers? Had not Paine admonished that only "when France shall be surrounded with revolutions she will be in peace and safety"? Was it not recorded that even More's Utopians had assisted in the fraternal deliverance of their less fortunate neighbours?

A special resolution was introduced at the Hotel d'Angleterre on that Sunday in November 1792 which called for the emancipation of oppressed England, even suggesting a French invasion to "rescue England from slavery." Henry Redhead Yorke led the vociferous opposition, but lost by a majority of one; whereupon he and his friends walked out. Oswald, in a rage, told Yorke he was not fit to live in a civilised society; Robert Rayment (an economist who had offered his expertise on national income and expenditure to his French followers) proceeded to denounce Yorke to the Paris authorities as an English spy whose real name was Redhead. A warrant for his arrest was issued, and his effects were seized; but Yorke, one of a new breed of wandering revolutionaries, had already departed (and we shall be picking up his story in a moment).

The chronicler of the British colony in Paris during these years has done some painstaking research on the vicissitudes which befell members of the Revolutionary Club[15]. Six had violent deaths. One took poison to avoid the gallows; another was killed resisting arrest; two brothers were executed; Oswald fell in a Vendée battle ("probably through treachery"); another perished on the scaffold. Ten suffered imprisonment in Paris (including, of course, Paine, and Yorke's enemy, Rayment).

IF WE PAUSE for a moment to inquire more pertinently who in all this *galère* preached, beyond the "hot unutterabilities", a significant doctrine of utopia and revolution, then it would appear that, apart from Paine whose views are well-known enough, there were only two: Joel Barlow and Henry Yorke. Both were "foreigners", even in the British colony in Paris.

Even Paine, it should be recalled, appeared to be a man without a country, and in the valiant efforts to liberate him from Luxembourg prison it was difficult to determine whether he was still an Englishman by birth, an American by naturalisation, or a Frenchman by virtue of honorary citizenship. Barlow was an American poet who came to England in 1791, left London as a representative of the Corresponding Societies, and was to die in the retreat from Moscow while on a U.S. mission to Napoleon. "Doubtless," he announced, "a great revolution in the management of the affairs of the nations is soon to be expected through all Europe. . . ." In 1792 we find him straddling the warring revolutionary factions by arguing that the French Revolution was essentially a model, by which he meant that it was only its inspiration (and perhaps its insurrectionary strategy and tactics as well) that was for export. "After the example which France has given," he wrote in a formal message from Paris to London, "the science of revolutions will be rendered easy, and the progress of rising liberty rapid. . . ." Soon thereafter Barlow transmitted a further French message with the latest news of "the science of revolutions", namely that one would not be enough inasmuch as "the second revolution is only the completion of the first. . . ." Confident in the two-stage process of scientific revolutionism he ventured to predict that addresses of felicitation would shortly be crossing the sea to a National Convention in England.[16]

[15] John G. Alger, "The British Colony in Paris: 1792–93", in *English Historical Review* (October 1898), pp. 672–94.

[16] *Tooke Trial*, vol. I, pp. 203, 207; *Hardy Trial*, p. 510.

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Henry Yorke, who had actually crossed the sea to attend personally to the rising of liberty, was not quite so certain that progress would be so easy; but he was not a man lightly deterred. He recognised that "People are not so easily got out of their old forms, as some are apt to suggest . . . such revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs." Still, as he was once quoted as saying with his characteristic bravura,

> . . . you behold before you, young as I am, about 22 years of age, a man who has been concerned in three revolutions already; who, though late, assisted in the revolution in America; who so essentially contributed to that in Holland; who has materially assisted in that of France; and who will still continue to cause revolutions all over the world.[17]

Yorke was indeed only an alias. He was born in the West Indies as Henry Redhead and must, if his biographical details are to tally at all, have begun his international career at a very tender age. Certain revolutionary personalities appear to function with a special panache when, uprooted from somewhere else, they change their names and take on a new and extravagant identity. As we know from so many other careers in the revolutionary ranks, there is some private purposive power in such men which is evidently released when they plunge themselves into public activities under a strange name and in an alien place. In this sense Henry Redhead Yorke is one of the first of a new breed of modern "world-revolutionaries."

The new world-revolutionary spirit is caught in the following passage, from the testimony of the State Trial in 1795 in which Henry Redhead Yorke defended his role in the dramatic events of French and English politics:

> A man feels an energy about him when embarked in a just cause . . . that which is engendered by virtue, that which enables a man to kindle in the common blaze of liberty, and impels him in a time of danger, from an enlightened love of country, to be foremost, and to share its various fate, whether of destruction or of glory. . . .
>
> The public safety is not injured by those who assemble in public squares and meetings, and advance doctrines, couched in the spirit of error, but from those who never show their faces among the people, who never publicly avow any opinions, who temporize always between truths and falsehoods, or who undulate from one side to the other, as the tempest of opinions blows them. . . .
>
> It may be replied that these observations have a direct tendency to ferment the public mind, and to promote sedition; but to have right thoughts of things, and to communicate those thoughts to others, is the whole part we have to act on this stage of the world.[18]

1689 may have had its bit of old Orange glory, but it was not enough; more was needed. "If the Revolution were not a Revolution for the people, it was no Revolution at all, but a conspiracy of a few ennobled oppressors against the liberty and happiness of the many. . . ."[19] He was, as he confessed, "madly in love with ideal Liberty", and the true romance of his life would be the causing of revolutions; it was the fiery cause of Utopia and "the whole part we have to act on this stage of the world. . . ."

> We desire to see wisdom demanding of miserable millions their wants, and humanity at hand to supply them. We desire to see the sanctuary of virtue erected, and the standard of Liberty planted in our land, around which the people may rally as to a Holy of Holies. In short, we desire to see the altar of Equality blazing in Britain, whose streams of fire, whilst they shock, convulse, and tear down the rotten pillars of prejudices; whilst they shall consume tyrants, and terrify public delinquents; shall pierce into the hearts of the whole people, and confirm the wide empire of morals on the wreck of superstition and vice. . . . Let revolution of sentiment precede reformation in government and manners.

Whereupon (the speech was made on Castle-hill in Sheffield in April of 1794) he was acclaimed by thousands, and his carriage was pulled through the town in a triumphal procession. This was Henry Yorke's greatest day, the high—and final—climax to his youthful career as a revolutionary rhetorician. The Sheffield text, in all its eloquence and rhodomontade, was reprinted again and again in the various transcripts of the State Trials of the 1790s; and Thomas Erskine himself, so cool and formidable in his successful defence of Thomas Hardy (in part a defence of his client against the linguistic excesses of Yorke's fulminatory manner), was moved to note that "this extraordinary performance" still read so well that "every man in the court was affected by it."[20]

Henry Redhead Yorke was never more English than in that self-depreciatory moment when he reflected on his early days in Paris and remarked that "no subject of the British Crown, who entered into the views of the French, returned from France without importing with him much of the ferocity of the French character, and much of the bombast of their style. . . ."[21]

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[17] "Henry Redhead Yorke (1772–1813)", *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 21, pp. 1258–9. *Proceedings on the Trial of Henry Redhead, otherwise Henry Yorke*, in *State Trials* (ed. Howell, 1818), vol. 25, p. 1046.

[18] *Yorke Trial*, in *State Trials* (ed. Howell, 1818), vol. 25, pp. 1083–5.

[19] *Tooke Trial*, p. 311.

[20] *Tooke Trial*, vol. 1, pp. 326–7. *Yorke Trial*, p. 1085. *Hardy Trial*, vol. 24, pp. 614ff., 924.

[21] *Memoirs and Correspondence of Castlereagh* (ed. Vane, 1848), vol. 1, p. 258.

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A Confession

THERE CAME a time when Henry Redhead Yorke had only tears for the drama and apologies for his part "on this stage of the world." Had the expenditure of all that energy truly been on behalf of a just cause? If his doctrine had been "couched in the spirit of error" (this was, at the time, only a rhetorical concession to the jury trying him), would not any slight bit of temporising between truth and falsehood, between one side and the other, have served the public interest better? How could he ever have been so outraged, so "insulted" in fact, by what he once felt in that earlier period to be an *abject* idea to "distrust the powers which nature has given us"—the *passive* notion to "acquiesce in institutions which, though injurious, may be preferable to those that may be endured by others"—the *foolish* attitude to "balance between tolerable vices and positive good, between unnatural systems and novel untried but just maxims"—when just those ideas, notions, and attitudes increasingly appeared to him to be the better part of political wisdom? What seductive pride had impelled him to want to be "foremost", to kindle in a "blaze of liberty", to seek to share in the glory of man's fate even at the risk of "destruction"?[22]

The jury at the York assizes had found him guilty of "unlawful combination and conspiracy", and the judge had given him a sentence of two years. Some of the dissenters of the day had been acquitted, some convicted. Thomas Muir in Edinburgh had declined Thomas Erskine's services because he insisted on determining for himself the conduct of the case, for he was, frankly, less interested in "getting off" than in promoting the cause. Like Muir, Henry Yorke rather mismanaged his own defence—although the Yorkshire legal atmosphere was mild in comparison to the illiberal fury which reigned in Lord Braxfield's Scottish courts and which sent radicals like Muir and Maurice Margarot to Botany Bay for 14 years.

It was perhaps understandable that, in the case of the Scottish trial of Muir, the services of Thomas Erskine were declined. Muir was evidently intent on a confrontation with the so-called justice usually meted out by Scotland's harsh chief judge, Lord Braxfield; and his victimisation might well serve the general struggle. The strategy of Henry Yorke in conducting his own defence is less clear. It could be that Yorke had taken umbrage at the lengths to which Erskine would go in the court-room to obtain an acquittal, as he had in the cases of Hardy and Tooke. The Tooke trial took place on 17–22 November 1794, some eight months before the Yorke trial in July 1795. At the Tooke trial Erskine had made a special point of differentiating among the various strands of radical thought. He was especially concerned to identify Yorke's "extremism" as inapplicable to an understanding of John Horne Tooke's "moderation." He wanted the jury to dismiss as irrelevant "all that trash and farrago which has been making everybody sick for these three last days. . . ." He was making a reasonable plea for a reasonable man. "I am not here defending all the papers which you have heard read, many of them are indecent, many are rash, and many of them are absurd; but that is not the question; here the question is, what were the objects of this man? . . ."[23] The result was a memorable victory for freedom of speech and dissenting expression.

I HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY in my account of quoting certain disputed passages, although Yorke—supported by friendly and loyal witnesses during his trial at the York assizes—attempted to deny them. I feel justified in so doing. The fact of the matter was that the official pamphlet of the great Sheffield speech had been printed by Yorke's close friends, who had asked him to give them a text for publication and distribution. It was this published version which had been submitted in evidence. In his efforts to challenge its validity—he denied saying such things, none of his friends could recall having heard such things—the one point which would have been decisive was the charge that the pamphlet had been tampered with, that someone had inserted passages from another hand, that in a word a fake had been concocted, presumably by the authorities, in order to "frame" an otherwise impeccable radical reformer on charges of revolutionary incendiarism. This charge could not be established, nor was it even properly made.

In his own cross-examination of his defence witnesses, Yorke was too clever—and too rhetorical—by half. For he had been arguing that the extreme passages in question ("fire", "explosion", "burying despotism", and the like) were not only not his own, but were after all only "a jumble of metaphors." One of the great young orators of the day, he thought that he could with irony deny that he had "bewitched" anybody with "my eloquence and sublime metaphors." He protested too eloquently. The judge and the jury must have raised their eyebrows at his court-room flights of oratory, and they presumably concluded that Yorke's language, as charged and as heard, were all of a metaphorical piece. Consider this exchange:

[22] Yorke's phrases are from his Sheffield speech, quoted in *Tooke Trial*, p. 321.
[23] *Tooke Trial*, pp. 378, 386.

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"You have generally heard that I was a man-butcher fond of blood and slaughter? . . ."

"I have often heard you say in private, that no one but a knave or a madman would think of bringing about a revolution in this country."

There were too many published texts which elaborated Yorke's revolutionism for this "private" assurance to have counted for much.

"What do you think was the general tendency of my speech upon Castle-hill?"

"I conceive it was to advise the people to be very orderly in their conduct, to endeavour to disseminate political information, and that your ideas extended to no greater degree than that, and by that means they would become sensible of any abuses in the mode of election or representation."

"Then you thought the political knowledge I wished them to acquire, was the knowledge of their own country; not to teach them revolutionary doctrines, or the doctrine of the holy and immaculate guillotine? . . ."

If the jury could believe that, they could believe anything; and that last characteristic turn of phrase didn't help.[24]

A good deal of the exaggerated and contrived quotations which government informers had offered to the court was effectively brought into doubt; yet even these do not seem to be very much out of character, except possibly for the trite imputation of drunkenness ("he appeared to me rather in liquor", "he did not appear to be so sober a man as he generally is"). One witness put it more fairly, and probably more accurately, when he characterised Yorke as a man who "used to get a little warm in conversation now and then."[25] Some quotations, then, should be used with caution; but then so must Yorke's denials. The following, which I quote only for purposes of giving the atmosphere of the court-room charges, is from one Henry Alexander whom Thomas Erskine had convincingly demolished as a paid government informer. It is a garbled and probably untrustworthy report, but nevertheless of interest. The meeting with Yorke was supposed to have taken place some time towards the end of 1793 at Robinson's Coffee-house in Shire-lane, London.

"On the last night that he was at the society, he took leave of them by a long speech—he said he was going to Bel-gi-um—Bel-gi-na."

"Did he say for what purpose he was going there?"

"Yes; that he was going to head the French army, and should be back by Christmas; that he had received a letter from a friend of his in Bel-gi-um, where they were going; that they would be ripe by Christmas—he was going at the head of them."

"Ripe for what?"—"For a revolution."

"Did he say whether he meant to return into England again?" "He did."

"What did he say to you in that speech—the substance of it?"

"The substance of it was as I informed you before—that he had received a letter to go over; that he had an offer of being a member of the National Convention in France; and that he was in hopes that he would have the pleasure of coming here either by Christmas; or the beginning of the year, at the head of them; and that he should find them all ready to join him; and that he was in hopes that Mr Pitt, with the different ministers he mentioned, and the King's head, would be upon Temple-bar. . . ."

"Did he say anything about the Sans Culottes?"—"He said a great deal about them, that they were a set of brave fellows. . . ."

"What did he say about bloodshed?"

"He said, that there would be no good done without some bloodshed. . . ."

"Where was the blood to be shed?"

"He did not say." (*Hardy Trial*, p. 640)

It is, of course, impossible to untangle truth and falsehood here, how much was made up, exaggerated and elaborated (or simply misunderstood), and how much represented a kernel of truth about the personality and activities of this most colourful English radical on the European scene.

YORKE MARSHALLED much legalistic lore and studded his remarks with learned references to Hume and Burke, Locke and Beccaria, Blackstone and Sir George Savile. But he had been ill-advised to attempt to deny the undeniable—that his views could be more properly subsumed under revolutionary theory than reformist moderation. He still might have defended his "fiery metaphors" as forms of free speech which were not intended to, nor did they in point of fact, lead to conspiracies or seditious combinations. The government's case about arms and weapons ("long knives", "pike blades to be fluted like a bayonet", "night-cats" against cavalry charges) proved to be very thin indeed. Yorke was simply too rhetorical to be able to defend his rhetoric on sober legal grounds. It might well have succeeded. In his summing-up, Sir Giles Rooke (the Justice of His Majesty's Court of Common Pleas at the York assizes), said this:

". . . you should be apprized of what I consider to be the right of every man in this country; namely, that he has a right to discourse upon speculative plans of reform, with this proviso, that he shall not endanger the peace of his country . . . if the conduct of the defendant had been merely a speculation of his own, it would have been a different thing." (*Yorke Trial*, pp. 1149–1152)

He reassured the jury that if Yorke, and his friends, had been merely "honest speculators", then the verdict would have to be not guilty. But beyond political speculation there was the danger

[24] *Yorke Trial*, pp. 1130–1135.
[25] *Hardy Trial*, pp. 654, 662.

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of "tumult and disaffection." The jury returned within twenty minutes with a verdict of guilty. Yorke was fined and sentenced to two years in prison, although he actually was to serve closer to four in a Dorchester Castle cell. One would have thought that by a modern standard of the legal limits of free speech and expression, namely, the necessity of proving "a clear and present danger", there was little evidence indeed that an English revolutionary rhetorician had been the instigator of deep disaffection, not to mention actual tumult.

Yorke—who later was admitted to the Inner Temple as a barrister and also achieved a reputation as a scholar—had read much and reflected deeply in his prison cell. He emerged in 1798 after his years of confinement in Dorchester with the manuscript of a *Letter to the Reformers* which he promptly rushed into print.[26]

YORKE'S PAMPHLET was addressed to those "who have been egregiously misled by the artifices of demogogues,"—he was candid enough to add—"or by the fatal misapprehension and enthusiasm of men like myself." A strange extremism had been at fault. ". . . the exotic plant of French liberty (and I call it so, in contradistinction to rational freedom) was admired and received by us, neither with sobriety nor prudence." It had all been a "foolish intoxication." Once he had been certain: "The human mind is progressive; so is the social mind. . . ." Now he saw complexities in the progressive faith.

Henry Yorke was reverting to the traditional vocabulary of older English ideologists: to sobriety, prudence, caution, care. These, he now discovered, had been most admirable features of the English past: "our forefathers at the time of the revolution," whether they were "newmodelling" or restoring, "affected no visionary schemes of speculative perfection." The intellectual differences between exotic libertarianism and the movement for (in his distinction) rational freedom was that the one offered chimerical visions and the other faced real historical dilemmas.

> What is just or unjust? What constitutes the happiness or misery of nations? What in their various situations is favourable or adverse to their good qualities? What is the highest point of felicity to which communities may aspire?—are all questions of the greatest importance, and are to be derived from the materials with which we are furnished by the lights of history. The love of novelty and system has, notwithstanding, prompted ardent imaginations to reject this mode of reasoning, and to wander in the boundless regions of chimaera.

He was, for all the elevated tone of argument, making a personal farewell to both utopia and revolution. He was breaking with his former life as a "Utopian artist" and as a political pilgrim to some new "Holy of Holies."

> . . . in the universal uproar which succeeds the reign of laws, the abettors of such a system, awaken from their delirium, and retire with affright from the monster which they have raised. But the repentance of the Utopian artists comes too late; the tumult of the passions are not so easily asswaged; and they are doomed to be mortified spectators, perhaps victims, of a howling storm, which they perceive it is easier to set in motion, than to appease. I speak feelingly.

This felt note of repentance gives a confessional character to the whole text, although Yorke attempted to explain how revolution degenerates into imperialism, why the rage of innovation had become "too general and too violent", why even his old guiding-lights (Pym, Sidney, Locke) were less relevant than his old friend Condorcet's plea for gradualism in the struggle to "obtain a freedom more effectual, more substantial." The inner essence of his recantation was reserved for his last two pages.

> I have now done. By thus openly declaring my sentiments, I may incur blame or excite malevolence. . . . My principles, religious and political, are certainly different from what they were when I entered the prison. I am prepared, if it be necessary, to explain the causes of that change. I solemnly declare that I have nothing to hope from any party; from ministers or from opposition. I am totally unconnected with either. Altho' I have deeply and severely suffered from long imprisonment, both in fortune and domestic happiness, and altho' I have been invited to repair the mischiefs by entering again on political engagements, yet I will not sacrifice my future tranquillity to temporary advantages, nor my opinions to interest. If through me, the country have been wounded, I implore its forgiveness, and sincerely pray that the evils which may arise from any misconduct of mine, may light on my head, and not on Great Britain; and that in charity to the failings of human nature, it may be ascribed to the levity and inconsiderateness of youth *[Yorke's footnote: I was only *twenty-two* years of age when I was first imprisoned, and have remained nearly four years in custody.]. . . . If for such opinions, I am destined in an ill-fated hour of my country to be led to the scaffold, I shall willingly resign my life, in testimony of a constitution, the beneficient effects of which I have felt even in the melancholy solitude of a prison.

Some years later, when he had recovered from these lingering traces of his old penchant for melodramatic self-presentation, he found himself tranquilly calling on the painter David in his apartment in the Louvre. He astonished himself, as he recorded in one of his published letters from

[26] H. R. Yorke, Esq., *A Letter to the Reformers* (Dorchester, 1798).

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France, by calmly "sitting down under the roof of a man who actually signed a warrant for my arrest some years ago."[27] But it was all in another country, and besides the revolution was dead. "But in this capital these things are of course, and quite as natural as if in the year 1793 I had dined with him, and in the evening he had sent me to prison, and two days after to the guillotine. . . ." Here indeed was ideology recollected in tranquillity.

From Darkness to Dawn

IT WOULD BE useful to remind ourselves of the stations on the untranquil way Henry Redhead Yorke had come. It had been an ebullient decade, beginning with the excitement on the streets of Paris (in 1792) as he wandered among "a nation of Gods." It reached, for him, its high climax with his fiery Yorkshire pamphlets of 1793–4 on behalf of reason and revolution[28] and his wildly acclaimed speech in Sheffield on 4 April 1794. It moved to a dramatic and unexpected dénouement with his confession and recantation after his release from jail (in 1798) and his final summing up of the splendours and miseries of his career as a utopian revolutionary (in a posthumous work, written in 1802 and published in 1814, entitled *Travels in France*). In a period of ten years he encompassed one of the basic cyclical patterns of revolutionary ideology. Let us recall the ringing phraseology with which the young man had first committed himself.

Dazzled by the prospect of a new dawn after all the darkness and filled with a detestation of established evils, prepared for a career of plotting and scheming and conspiring in order to break all chains and to make a clean sweep, ready to apologise in advance for any chaos and anarchy that might be part of a necessarily wild transitional phase (indeed it might even be necessary, in the fury and the agony, to sacrifice a whole generation), he was invincibly armed with the certainty that all power would be seized by the poor and the oppressed, that it was, after all, the final conflict, that universal emancipation, peace on earth, and the world brotherhood of man were the sweet prizes of the future.

This is the way these principles, passions, and prejudices emerged in one ideologue's historic eloquence. Or: how a young Promethean committed himself to that generous zeal which (as he would later observe of himself and other "Utopian artists") inspired nothing but "holy insurrections against established authority" and led to the exterminating fury of revolutionary inhumanity, to that boundless permissiveness in which "*any thing* may be done."

1. **Darkness before Dawn.** "Gaiety, joy, hilarity, are banished from our island; a fixed gloom and melancholy have seized us; the heart is no longer glad; and every man suspects an enemy in a friend. . . . Men think little, say nothing, and are afraid of reasoning; they are even alarmed at their own ideas. Mistrust and terror form the basis of the general manners. The citizens live separate from each other, and the whole nation becomes melancholy, pusillanimous, stupid, and silent. Such is the scale of misfortune and degradation to which Despotism or Inequality would reduce the human race. But observe the celestial walk of sweet EQUALITY . . . ."

2. **Detest and Destroy.** "COMRADES! we are at length arrived to the period of emphatic distress. . . . Party leaders of all kinds are unmasked, and proved to be conspirators against the People. . . . The *Ins* and *Outs* are alike your common enemies. The *Ins* wish to keep their places, the *Outs* wish to get *in* them. *Men*, and not *Principles*, are the object of the contest; *Power*, and not Freedom, the cause. *You* are to be the reward and spoil of the conquering party. . . .

. . . But the merchants of the Exchange, and the politicians of St James's, should reflect that the happiness of a people is not to be estimated by the abundance of wealth and the extent of territories; both of which are capable of sapping the foundations of national freedom. . . .

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[27] Henry Redhead Yorke, *Letters from France* vol. 1, p. 299.

As one historian has written of David's role as "artist-policeman", he was "closely associated with the levers of power during the so-called 'Reign of Terror'. As a member of the Committee of General Security he ranked with a dozen other top police officials at the very summit of the political hierarchy of the First Republic. This supreme national security organization, co-partner of the better-known Committee of Public Safety, performed functions similar to those of the Cheka in the Russian Revolution. The central police authority, armed with sweeping powers, was informed and obeyed by a complicated network of agents and auxiliaries throughout France. Contrary to the traditional view, David was an active, responsible and conscientious member of the Committee. During this period of office (15 September 1793 through 26 July 1794) he regularly attended its sessions. . . . In general he was an active participant in the daily business of the police authority and he signed almost as many decrees as Robespierre did during the same period. . . ." David L. Dowd, "Jacobinism and the Fine Arts", in *Art Quarterly* (vol. xvi, Autumn 1953), pp. 207–8.

[28] Henry Yorke, *These Are the Times that Try Men's Souls! A Letter to John Frost, a prisoner in Newgate* (1793). Henry Yorke, *Thoughts on Civil Government: Addressed to the Disfranchised Citizens of Sheffield* (1794).

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Citizens! the day of account and retribution is at hand. Then will the people be called upon to exert all the severe energy of Justice. . . . A vast majority of the people are excluded from their lawful rights, and consequently there must always be a strong party who hate and detest the government, and who must at different periods acquire strength, and trouble, convulse, or finally destroy it. . . ."

3. **Break the Chains.** "The contest is between principles opposed to errors, Man opposed to his Oppressors; it must therefore be great and terrible. A system rooted in the soil of a country, and deriving a sacredness from prescription, appears to be a powerful obstacle to the efforts of the oppressed. But if men would analyse governments, they would discover that they are excessively weak, and are upheld only by those chains of prejudices and circumstances, by which they hold mankind in awe. Break but these chains, and the whole scaffolding of authority falls to the ground. The trumpet of political salvation has been sounded in triumph through Britain. . . ."

4. **The Clean Sweep.** "Nor ought a people . . . labouring under oppression, to await the operation of some unexpected vicissitude, which may happen in the slow revolution of ages, to effect a sudden transition to happiness from the extremity of miseries. . . . When corruptions have mounted to their climax, then it is that unskilful legislators are for applying temporary repairs, instead of prudently sweeping the whole away, and beginning afresh. . . ."

5. **Three Great Revolutions.** "The ever memorable revolution of America promoted a spirit of enquiry and discussion, that soon made men long after Freedom. At this period Reason, with her offspring Liberty, were recalled from their long exile, into the cabinets of Philosophers, and the strangers were welcomed into the homely mansions of Poverty. Like the periodical overflowings of the Nile, their return has excited an universal joy. . . . Overlapping a vast chaos of prejudices and abuses, the French nation rushed at once into Liberty, and exhibits a brilliant Aurora to an astonished world. She is now moving in magnificent splendour towards her meridian, from whence she will scorch and consume the Tyrants of the Universe. . . . It has only enlarged the sphere of enquiry, which pervades the [British] nation with the swiftness of wildfire, and will, though at present taking a subterranean passage, in despite of every effort to prevent it, BURST FORTH WITH A TERRIBLE EXPLOSION, WHEN AND WHERE IT IS LEAST EXPECTED!"

6. **All Power to the Powerless.** "During all ages, the repose of the world has been distributed by the agitation of one great, though simple question—not whether there be power, nor whence it came, but *who should have it*. . . . In the general poverty and wretchedness of the people, we can easily discover for whom Government was made. On all sides, there is a conspiracy of the Great to oppress the poor; and laws, instead of opposing, have sanctioned this guilty league, by conferring on the one both power and influence, and by reducing the other to the extremity of wretchedness and ignorance. . . . And as a law of coercion prevails everywhere, as Truth itself cannot be whispered without danger, and personal security is at the mercy of hired and miscreant informers, and a worse than Spanish Inquisition established throughout our country, in contempt of its Constitution and Laws, I think it is high time that we come to a speedy and definitive settlement with our Rulers."

7. **Plotting and Scheming.** "It is oppression alone that ferments the public mind, and animates men to conspire the overthrow of a rotten Government, a wicked Minister, or a despotic King. . . . By an electric and general resurrection of Reason, the palsied faculties of man are put into motion. . . . And now that I mention [Algernon] Sidney, I feel my heart glow with a patriotic fervour, and I glory to hold up his life, writings, courage, and even his death to the imitation of Englishmen. He was ever plotting and scheming the subversion of a cruel and iniquitous system of oppression."

8. **The Sacrifice of a Generation.** "Almost all the revolutions that have happened were turbulent, bloody, and unprincipled; but surely no good man will think that a revolution giving happiness to the present age, and transmitting a rich bequest to future generations, leaving to their discretion the liberty to correct, improve, pawn or annul that inheritance in favour of a better, no one will think that such a revolution is dearly earned, altho' a whole generation perish in the contest. . . ."

9. **A Time of Wildness.** ". . . For, believe me, I would rather live in the world, when it is run wildest, than tamely breathe under a Government which is nothing but disorder, and which destroys all those affections that would flourish, unsullied, even in a disorganized state of society. . . . Encouraged by that liquid fire that sweeps prejudice from the earth, the people may prefer for a time society without a government, rather than tolerate a government that breaks the harmony and peace of society, and affords to a band of despots a

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perpetual scramble for power. . . . It is a common remark in China, that at the eve of a revolution, there is always a great increase of rigorous punishments."

10. **The Afro-Asian Fury.** "I call every man a tyrant who holds another in chains. Relinquish your colonies. . . . But it is not the Slave Trade only, that ought to be abolished; you should strike at the root of the evil, and exterminate SLAVERY itself. Throughout every nation of the earth, let the oppressed awaken from their drunken sleep;—let the African, the Asiatic, the European, burst asunder their chains, and raise a pious war against tyranny. Should tyrants, sensible of the indignant temper of the oppressed, refuse to expiate their crimes by a voluntary renunciation; should they wrestle with Freedom, let the PEOPLE roll on them in a tempest of fury, and compel them to expire in agonies! . . ."

11. **Peace or War.** "War can never benefit the PEOPLE, because their happiness consists in order, plenty and liberty, and as it discomposes all these, they must be plunged sooner or later into an abyss of misery. It is commonly proclaimed in haste, and always conducted in cruelty (for what is honourable war, but honourable butchery?) and its most inevitable consequence is, the loss of some portion or other of public liberty. . . . THEY declare wars at random—it is the wretched lot of the PEOPLE to wage them. . . . Happy had it been for the sons of the earth, if their crowned and mitred Tyrants, instead of delivering up to massacre, millions of useful beings, to avenge their quarrels, and those of their harlots, had erected a public Theatre, and with poignards in their hands, exhibited to the world the utility and glory of war. One generous example would have curbed the unbridled fury of future heroes, the lives of millions have been saved, and the world been this day in peace. But the times are at length accomplished:—a mighty change has taken place in the reasoning of man, and tyrants know it—and tremble. The political world begins to move, and the awful voice of the people is heard. The hand of oppressed nations is about to dwell heavy on the oppressor, and Europe may congratulate itself that War is on the wane, and that a final and terrible blow will be given to those ferocious and unjust plans of murder, which have for ages past, desolated the fairest portions of the earth. . . ."

12. **The Final Conflict.** "There never was, nor ever will be again, a war like the present. It is the last of Europe. It is a war of twenty-eight million of human beings, contending for everything that is dear to man, against a few kings vainly attempting to subjugate them. . . ."

13. **World Brotherhood.** "Benevolence is of no country, but embraces within the wide circle of her arms, from Lake Huron to the wall of China, the brotherhood of the human race."

14. **Living in the Universal Future.** "Doubtless the moment of universal emancipation is far off; but the contemplative man, who is a friend to the human race, lives much beyond his own age, and becomes the contemporary of distant times. Future generations occupy his care, their sorrows afflict him as sensibly as those of the present age; he feels an interest in the universal happiness of the world, and lives for ever with all nations."[29]

Yorke, Thomas Paine & the Failed "World Revolution"

TAKEN TOGETHER all this amounted to a rare and extraordinary ideological configuration, almost unrivalled in its range of revolutionary imagery and ethico-rhetorical richness till the age of Marxism and the apocalyptic Left. But within ten years it was in a shambles. Events forced second thoughts, as Henry Yorke reconsidered his "utopian artistry" in a Dorchester Castle cell.

Nor was it the first time that his beliefs had been undermined. For all the momentary fanaticism of his powerful convictions, Henry Yorke was not temperamentally averse to changing his mind. He had done so once before, at the very outset of his political career; "having ardently espoused the cause of Despotism", he subsequently admitted embracing "a contrary mode of thinking", thus initiating one of the first of the great modern intellectual moves from Right to Left and then back again. Coming from the West Indies he had made a defence of Negro slavery and the economic advantages of a colonial empire. This left him with a strong sense of guilt, but also with a lively eagerness to cope with it openly. "I have injured the wretched Negro, by formerly denying him his rights. In

[29] The sources for the above fourteen quotations: (1) Yorke, *These Are the Times,* p. 37; Yorke, *Thoughts on Civil Government,* p. 75. (2) *Thoughts on Civil Government,* pp. 5–7; *These Are the Times,* pp. 22, 62. (3) *These Are the Times,* p. 24. (4) *These Are the Times,* pp. 30–33. (5) Yorke, *Reason Urged against Precedent,* pp. 40, 51. (6) *Reason Urged against Precedent,* pp. 7, 10, 23. (7) *Reason Urged against Precedent,* p. 52; *These Are the Times,* p. 51. (8) *These Are the Times,* pp. 29–30. (9) *Thoughts on Civil Government,* p. 57; *These Are the Times,* pp. 53, 56. (10) *Reason Urged against Precedent,* pp. 34–5. (11) *Reason Urged against Precedent,* pp. 26–30. (12) *These Are the Times,* p. 74. (13) *These Are the Times,* p. 45. (14) *Reason Urged against Precedent,* p. 36.

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the sincerity of my heart, I spoke not what I thought, but what I believed I thought. The only retribution I can make, is to see him righted. . . ." In the previous century such ideological conversions were less public; and he would have been labelled, not unlike Marchamount Nedham whom in many ways he resembled, a "turn-coat." Now the political confession was becoming a new literary genre. ". . . I am not ashamed publickly to avow that I am that changeling, and apostate. . . ."[30]

Henry Yorke's quarrel with the Revolution—less abstract than James Mackintosh's, more far-reaching than Thomas Paine's—brought him into a state of even profounder apostasy. The differences, at once personal and political, had accumulated over the years; and they had actually begun in his turbulent Paris time when there had been both the elements of factional rancour and personal danger, usually a potent recipe for ideological estrangement and ultimate defection. I have already noted the incident of his falling-out with his Jacobin comrades, his denunciation and near-arrest as he fled for his life. This could not have been an altogether unexpected turn of events. Yorke recalls a conversation with Robespierre in which the Jacobin leader had given him an "awful rebuke" for extolling *The Spirit of the Laws*—no, Montesquieu had a weak, dogmatic, prejudiced mind, and was nothing but *un parlementaire*, not at all *un bon républicain*. "I need not here tell you the effect," Yorke writes, "which this stroke of criticism wrought upon me, for when I heard that Montesquieu would have been less by a head, had he fallen into Robespierre's hands, I felt such an unpleasant tickling in my neck, that the argument *convinced* me in a moment. . . ." Perhaps it was here, on the spot, that the suspicion began to dawn on him that the vaunted violence of profound social change might be less metaphor than murder. For the moment the public safety of the revolution commanded his political approval; but it could not have personally escaped him that this did not necessarily entail the private safety of any revolutionary. Yorke also recalls his meetings in Paris with Théroigne de Méricourt whom he found "young, handsome, humane, well-informed" but also "wild, savage, and ferocious."

> . . . One day she invited me to breakfast with her, and on my entering her apartment, the first objects that struck my sight were a pike, a dagger, a broad sword, a brace of pistols, and the *bonnet rouge* suspended over her chimney-piece; scattered about the floor lay about a hundred volumes and pamphlets, on her bed the Paris Journals, and on her table, *L'Ami du Peuple* by Marat. On my inquiring "why a lady of her charms"—(I was going to say, kept such dreadful instruments in her room)—
>
> "No compliment, Citizen, society is undergoing a grand reorganization, and women are about to resume their rights. We shall no more be flattered in order to be enslaved; those arms have dethroned the tyrant, and conquered freedom. Sit down and take your chocolate."
>
> The countenance, tone, and manner in which this chastisement was conveyed, left no room for reply; I obeyed her mandate, and was submissive during the rest of the morning.

Yorke's fellow-radical in Paris, John Sheares, had evidently fallen in love with Théroigne, and in the hope of giving up politics and retiring into private life he had proposed marriage. "When he tendered his proposals, she pulled a pistol from her pocket, and threatened to shoot him if he uttered another syllable upon the subject. . . ." The end of the story, as Yorke bitterly records, was that Sheares was hanged as a rebel in Dublin a few years later, and Théroigne went slowly mad and was committed to a Paris asylum.[31]

I MENTION THESE anecdotal details because it is in the context of this remembrance of things past that Henry Yorke finally tried to make a serious reckoning, larger and more reflective in scope but still (unlike Sir James Mackintosh, as we have seen) never very far removed from the aching personal experience of revolutionary events. When he returned to Paris in 1802, he revisited the hotel in the Rue Coqueron where he had resided in 1792–3; he looked in at the Convention hall where he had been present at the trial of King Louis; he sought out his old friend Thomas Paine and found him living despondently in a bookseller's apartment in the Rue du Théâtre Français ("Republic! do you call this a Republic? Why, they are worse off than the slaves of Constantinople. . . ."). Yorke had known many of the leading French political figures and he now almost lost himself in the memories of "death and devastation."

> Why am I not blessed with the faculty of forgetfulness? Why cannot I forget myself? . . . I will drop a tear on this part of my history, and endeavour to blot it out for ever from my mind.

This was not so easily done, especially after his extraordinary confrontations with Thomas Paine and Jacques-Louis David—the one disillusioned and disenchanted, the other unrepentant and unreconstructed—which gave him, at long last, the personal face-to-face points of departure for

[30] Yorke, *Reason Urged against Precedent in a Letter to the People of Derby* (1793), pp. 4–5, 36–7. The *D.N.B.* biography of Yorke mentions the matter (vol. 21, p. 1258); see also the obituary in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* (vol. 83), March 1813, pp. 283–4.

[31] Henry Redhead Yorke, *Letters from France* (2 vols., 1814), vol. 1, pp. 273–6, 142. There is a shortened version of this work, edited by J. A. C. Sykes, under the title *France in Eighteen Hundred and Two* (1906), which is not very useful.

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his rather reluctant and much-postponed attempt to reflect on the revolutionary personality.

THERE ARE SOME superb passages in Henry Yorke's account of his elegiac interview with Paine, and the whole of it should one day be reprinted.[32]

> After I had waited a short time, Mr Paine came down stairs, and entered the room, dressed in a long flannel gown. I was forcibly struck with his altered appearance. Time seemed to have made dreadful ravages over his whole frame, and a settled melancholy was visible on his countenance. He desired me to be seated, and although he did not recollect me for a considerable time, he conversed with his usual affability. I confess I felt extremely surprised that he should have forgotten me; but I resolved not to make myself known to him, as long as it could be avoided with propriety. . . .

When they did finally get to conversing about the old fraternal days, it was in the spirit of the traditional English coolness towards French political culture and character which has been a recurrent theme in these pages.

> They have shed blood enough for liberty, and now [Paine remarked ironically to Yorke] they have it in perfection. This is not a country for an honest man to live in; they do not understand any thing at all of the principles of free government, and the best way is, to leave them to themselves. You see they have conquered all Europe, only to make it more miserable than it was before.

Yorke was shown some of Paine's manuscripts and he took the trouble to copy out one passage, underlining every word.

> . . . As for myself [Paine wrote], I used to find some relief by walking alone in the garden after it was dark, and cursing with hearty good will the authors of that terrible system that had turned the character of the Revolution I had been proud to defend.
>
> I went but little to the Convention, and then only to make my appearance; because I found it impossible for me to join in their decrees, and useless and dangerous to oppose them. My having voted and spoken extensively, more so than any other member, against the execution of the King, had already fixed a mark upon me: neither dared any of my associates in the Convention to translate, and speak in French for me any thing I might have dared to have written. . . .[33]

Young Englishmen of Yorke's generation were being constantly surprised by the disjunction between English preconceptions and the French scene, by the shadow which fell

> *Between the conception*
> *And the creation*
> *Between the emotion*
> *And the response . . .*
> *Between the desire*
> *And the spasm*
> *Between the potency*
> *And the existence*
> *Between the essence*
> *And the descent. . . .*[34]

And Thomas Paine—outraged by the course of what he had hoped to be (in his famous London Tavern toast of November 1791) "the Revolution of the World"—was, especially after his own imprisonment as good, as experienced and instructive, a guide to the falling shadow as could be had. Once, at a Paris dinner, a youthful visitor from London noted with some puzzlement how well-known political enemies of the 1790s could still meet and talk, and Paine took the trouble to explain: ". . . Paine smiled, and said, that in the course of the Revolution persons dined together for the purpose of making each other talk, and then denounced the conversation to the Committee of General Safety."[35]

Perhaps more than any other single factor, it was this immoral "spirit of denunciation" which Paine felt to be the cause of the internecine fratricidal warfare among the revolutionaries and thus of the ignoble descent of the noble cause. Yet Paine had no other ethical alternative but to offer punishment for the men of punitive violence, to turn the charges of treason the other way.

> If every individual is to indulge his private malignancy or his private ambition, to denounce at random and without any kind of proof, all confidence will be undermined and all authority be destroyed. Calumny is a species of treachery that ought to be punished as well as any other kind of treachery. It is a private vice productive of public evils; because it is possible to irritate men into disaffection by continual calumny who never intended to be disaffected.[36]

Obviously Paine himself was one of those so disaffected. It is always late in the day that revolutionaries come to realise the missing elements in a boundless commitment of total enthusiasm, namely the bounds and limits which give meaning and definition to a theory of liberty and justice. Is there anything which a revolutionary may not do? Was it desirable for the plea of historical necessity always to amount to a limitless licence? And who was there—or what was there, in the absence of an effective constitution of liberty—to draw a line, somewhere, anywhere?

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[32] See Audrey Williamson, *Thomas Paine, His Life, Work and Times* (1973), pp. 254 ff., A. O. Aldridge, *Man of Reason: Life of Thomas Paine* (1959), pp. 267–70, and M. D. Conway, *Life of Paine* (1892), vol. II, pp. 300–4, all of which include excerpts.

[33] Yorke, *Travels in France*, vol. II, p. 354; Thomas Paine, *Complete Writings* (ed. Foner, 1945), vol. 2, p. 1124.

[34] T. S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men* (1925), in *Collected Poems* (1963), p. 89.

[35] From Lewis Goldsmith's memoir, *Antigallican Monitor*, 27 September, 1 November 1812, and 6–13 February 1814; in A. O. Aldridge, *Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine* (1959), p. 266.

[36] Aldridge, *Man of Reason*, p. 201.

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Even the best of friends could evidently think of no way to avoid escalating differences of political opinion into grave suspicions of treason. Barère was one of Paine's closest colleagues in the Convention, but it was Barère who delivered the speech leading to Paine's confinement to a cell in Luxembourg prison. (Barère later apologised to Paine "by saying he felt himself in danger and was obliged to do it. . . .")[37] It was Vadier, then President of the Convention which had conferred honorary citizenship on the heroic figure of the American revolution, who signed the paper for Paine's arrest; and Vadier in his turn felt himself justified because

> [Paine's] mind has not perceived the nature of the Revolution which has regenerated France; he has conceived the system only in the light of the delusions with which the false friends of our revolution have surrounded it. . . .[38]

Once again we have men preaching reason but meaning dogma, secular prophets who were religious casuists; indeed here was the authentic spirit of excommunication as inspired by the theology of a true revolutionary faith which finds heresy, sin, and evil lurking in the slightest deviation. The very fact of holding power as the representative of history means that he alone possesses true consciousness and is thus entitled (nay, compelled) to combat ruthlessly any and all illusory opinions of the system, the old one or the new one, and if necessary to exterminate the dangerous minds caught in something so devilish as delusion. In point of fact Paine's cell had been marked for the executioner, and only an accident saved him from the guillotine.

> . . . the door of our room was marked, unobserved by us, with that number in chalk; but it happened, if happening is the proper word, that the mark was put on when the door was open and flat against the wall, and thereby came on the inside when we shut it at night; and the destroying angel passed by it.[39]

Paine sensed the problem of corruption even in the Incorruptible Robespierre (among whose papers, after his death, there was found a memorandum preparing a decree of accusation against Paine); and perhaps indeed he was the very image of the "destroying angel" incarnate. How could there be intellectual liberty or personal safety for the man of opinion *par excellence* when all opinions had to meet the measure of an official doctrinal truth? Paine (as he said) put his faith in the pen, and not in the guillotine; revolutionary politics was to be a conflict of viewpoints, not of knives to the death. But (as Robespierre replied) "that method might do with such a country as America, but could avail nothing in one highly corrupted like France." "To disagree in opinion," an observer noted, "with a mind so heated, was to incur all the resentment it contained. . . ."[40] Yet surely it was less the heatedness of the mind than the coolness of the spirit which rendered him calm and confident in the incorruptibility of his own powerfulness: his might was right. At an Anglo-French breakfast in Paris (among the guests: Paine, Holcroft, Goldsmith, Tallien, Santerre, and Merlin de Thionville), the French argued classically in defence of the doctrine, Caesaro-Roman rather than Socratic Greek, that the most legitimate right which exists is that of the strongest.

> Mr Holcroft attempted to say something against this doctrine, but Paine desired him to hold his tongue, as he might as well talk of honour to a gang of thieves as to contradict revolutionary Frenchmen in their notion of right and wrong.[41]

Paine's bitterness extended from these table-talk ironies to a large disenchantment with France as a primary carrier of the revolutionary idea; a people, a nation had failed, not the idea. Between the desire and the spasm or the potency and the descent, there was no permanent shadow, for in theory, as Paine still believed (and Yorke and Mackintosh no longer did), other historic forces would come to make some more effectively moral beginning to his "Revolution of the World."[42]

Hopes may have been momentarily dashed, but not—as we know from Paine onwards to Ernst Bloch—hope in the principle of hope. As Paine wrote to Thomas Jefferson (20 April 1793),

> Had this revolution been conducted consistently with its principles, there was once a good prospect of extending liberty through the greatest part of Europe; but I now relinquish that hope. . . . As the prospect of a general freedom is now much shortened, I begin to contemplate returning home. I shall await the event of the proposed Constitution, and then take my final leave of Europe. . . .

E pur si muove, and still it moves; and still it burns.

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[37] Aldridge, *Man of Reason,* pp. 204, 336; Conway, *Paine,* vol. II, p. 131.

[38] Aldridge, *Man of Reason,* p. 210; Conway, *Paine,* vol. II, pp. 109–10.

[39] Conway, *Paine,* vol. II, p. 132; Aldridge, *Man of Reason,* p. 217.

[40] Aldridge, *Man of Reason,* p. 205; Conway, *Paine,* vol. II, p. 79.

[41] Aldridge, *Man of Reason,* p. 267.

[42] Or, to re-mix the metaphor (and this cannot be helped in a history of ideology), here is the sense of inextinguishable hope as it was put by a group of Scottish radicals in 1816 (Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution,* p. 222n.):

> "A mental revolution has taken place which the *ratio regum,* the logic of legitimacy, the point of the bayonet cannot counteract. . . . A spark was kindled at the French Revolution which the enemies of freedom think they have extinguished, but still it burns, and every fresh occurrence fans the flame."

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To Danton, a few weeks later, he again made it clear that his despairing mood had little to do with the essential "character of the Revolution", only with its excesses and misconduct, with what a young English disciple of Paine had termed "the triumph of imbecility and inhumanity over talent and virtue."

> I now despair of seeing the great object of European liberty accomplished, and my despair arises . . . from the tumultuous misconduct with which the internal affairs of the present revolution is conducted. . . .

And the future revolution? "Under that impenetrable veil, futurity, we know not what is concealed, and the day to arrive is hidden from us." It would seem that by leaving corrupted France and its "murderous system" for a still innocent, more moral America he was returning to the bosom of what he called, in a phrase most curious from him, "the mother church of government."

> Painful as the want of liberty may be, it is a consolation to me to believe that my imprisonment proves to the world that I had no share in the murderous system that then reigned. That I was an enemy to it, both morally and politically, is known to all who had any knowledge of me; and could I have written French as well as I can English, I would publicly have exposed its wickedness and shown the ruin with which it was pregnant. . . . Imprisonment with preservation of character, is preferable to liberty with disgrace.[43]

The pregnant ruin, then, was not conceived in the principles of revolution, of violent regeneration and total change, but only in aberrant revolutionary misconduct; it was villainous, venomous factionalism that had betrayed the revolution.

Yorke & David

THE POLITICS OF MELANCHOLY turned to polemical pique during Henry Yorke's meeting with Jacques-Louis David in his apartment in the Louvre.[44] He put forward a somewhat embarrassing question—could David recollect having signed the warrant for Yorke's arrest, and what were the charges that were to be preferred against him in that terrifying winter of 1792–3? David replied that it was simply impossible for him to recall all the warrants of arrest which he had issued when he was a member of the Committee of General Safety. After all, hundreds were sometimes signed in one day. Often, "in the hurry of business", he had put his name to warrants on the basis of some colleague's report. But, no doubt, every arrest was based on some previous information.

But then, "in the hurry of business", was not much injustice done? Yes, but "what could we do? . . . surrounded by traitors at home . . . was it always possible to discriminate?"

There was good reason for Yorke to suspect that once his name had been put on some list, on the basis of some vague or inaccurate or malicious information, then he might well have been liquidated by David's Committee on General Security. As Dr John Moore, a fellow-countryman of his, wrote in his Paris journal at that time:

> . . . A groundless suspicion, or a calumny invented and propagated by an enemy, may kindle the fury of a few fanatics, and the head of the person who is the object of it may be fixed on a pike before the magistrate can assemble force to protect him. His innocence is made apparent when it is too late; everybody laments his fate; the murderers however are excused, because they were misled (*égaré* is the palliative word used on such occasions) by the noblest of all errors, too much zeal for their country's good; and tranquillity is restored only till fresh suspicions and calumnies excite new murders.[45]

Yorke grew increasingly incensed with David's extenuation of the guilt of the atrocities, not least

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[43] Conway, *Paine*, vol. II, pp. 48, 52–3; Paine, *Complete Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 1331–2, 1335; Conway, *Paine*, vol. II, pp. 144–6; *Complete Writings*, vol. 2, p. 1126.

[44] On David and the relationship between revolutionary art and politics, see: David Lloyd Dowd, *Pageant-Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution* (1948); Louis Hautecoeur, *Louis David* (Paris, 1954); and Robert L. Herbert, *David, Brutus and the French Revolution: an Essay in Art and Politics* (1972).

David was rather less ferocious as a commissar of revolutionary art than as a zealous Jacobin policeman. Few artists of the day (and so many were royalists) were "purged": a few were imprisoned, none was guillotined. David actually protected Vien, the director of the old Academy, as well as the rococo master, Fragonard. One historian, in an odd phrase, refers to David's "admirable lack of vindictiveness." However, the new political guide-lines for artists, supposedly now liberated from autocratic manipulation, were single-minded and severe. David's pupils were, of course, in all the central jury posts, and they were relentless defenders of ideology and propaganda in the required new art. One (Topino-Lebrun) bemoaned that few of the paintings revealed sufficient revolutionary fervour; another (Fleuriot-Lescot) found the sculpture, especially the low reliefs, lacking in true and useful revolutionary spirit. A third (Wicar), in denouncing French artists who remained abroad, proposed that a painting in the Academy by Xavier Fabre be dragged to the Tree of Liberty, mutilated by every faithful revolutionary artist, and then burned amid cries of *"Vive la République!"* Small wonder that after a few terrifying years a leading revolutionary aesthetician, looking at the pictures exhibited at the Salon of 1795 by timid, frightened, a-political artists, could cry: *"O! mes belles espérances, comme vous avez été déçues!"* James A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France 1750-1799* (1965), pp. 113–17, 150–55.

[45] John Moore, *A Journal During a Residence in France* (1793), vol. II, pp. 137-8.

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perhaps because something atrocious had almost been done to him; he listened impatiently to David's sentimentalities about the days of revolutionary glory.

> . . . and after a flourish on the civil wars and massacres attendant on the acquisition of our English freedom, he challenged me to produce an instance of the establishment of a Republic, without wading through seas of blood.

Yorke's comment on this echoes Paine, but goes irascibly further:

> M. David, like every other Frenchman (and here I do not make a single exception of any one with whom I have been in company) is utterly ignorant of the nature of the liberty we enjoy, and of all our institutions. They have not a conception of the possibility of freedom existing in any state with a monarch at its head; with them, there is not a vestige of liberty among any people who have not high-sounding Roman titles. In the same manner they cannot comprehend the being of that middle class of society which constitutes the bulwark of our Isle. . . .
>
> David recognizes no freedom that is not open to holy insurrections against established authority. Wherever the shrieks of murder and the notes of the trumpet are not heard, there can be no liberty.

In the last analysis, then, this brilliant artist whose paintings had so impressed him was "a monster."

> To begin a sentence with expressions of humanity, and to end it with a climax of blood, is his chief delight. . . . The prospect of a bleeding world [is] the darling theme of his atrocious imagination.[46]

IT IS FORTUNATE that this raging rejection of the Frenchman of 1802 did not drive Henry Yorke completely into *ad hominem* argumentativeness. True, he despised the Paris intelligentsia, "that secondary swarm of literati, whose existence like that of reptiles, depends on depredation and injury" and, especially, "those political writers and orators who affect a great deal of information when they possess none." For centuries we have had this tone in the cross-channel cultural conflict: "No people upon earth possess greater facility than the French in setting themselves off to the greatest advantage, especially in persuading the world they know everything, when, in fact, they know very little or nothing. . . ."

But surely the question of revolution was not identical with the problem of a single national character? Yorke tried, in the end, to pose the issues of political violence and revolutionary ideology in a more general way. His preoccupation still remained: character and ethics, means and ends, their morals and ours. He still found it incredible that men of sensitive natures, "who were so humane they *would not kill a fly*", prove themselves to be "when immersed in the revolutionary whirlpool, the most cruel and inexorable devils incarnate. . . ." Whence, then, the exterminating fury in the revolutionary character? How explain the "vortex of excesses"? Why is it that "so many excellent men [became] converted into butchers"? What is the "fatal quality" of this "political pestilence"? Yorke's notable answer includes an element of psychological insight which gives a striking modern tone to the patterns of revolutionary ambivalence I have been trying to analyse.

> . . . as the cause of Liberty naturally invites the zeal of generous minds, atrocities are committed from which, as spectators, their minds would revolt with horror. But as agents, they conceive that *any thing* may be done for freedom; they gradually become callous to every feeling beyond their own sphere of action, till at length, the moral sense being extinguished in their breasts, they are open to every crime. The impetuosity of the torrent on which they are borne, is so great, that there is no retrocession, no time even for reflection; but forward they rush spreading desolation in their progress, unmoved by pity or compunction, and encouraging each other with the contemplation of their numbers, and the apparent grandeur of their

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[46] Yorke, *Travels in France*, vol. I, pp. 320–25. Nor was Yorke alone in his harsh judgment of Jacques-Louis David. Sir Walter Scott met him and thought him "a bloodthirsty terrorist." A dinner in Paris in 1815 was "thoroughly poisoned" for him by David's presence. J. G. Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1902), vol. V, p. 79:

> ". . . The poet, on entering the saloon, was presented to a stranger, whose physiognomy struck him as the most hideous he had ever seen; nor was his disgust lessened when he found, a few minutes afterwards, that he had undergone the *accolade* of David 'of the blood-stained brush'. . . ."

For Carlyle, too, there was a fastidious dislike of the person and the politics. ". . . The swoln cheek, choking his words in the birth, totally disqualified him as an orator; but his pencil, his head, his gross hot heart, with genius in a state of convulsion, will be there. A man bodily and mentally, swoln-cheeked, disproportionate; flabby-large, instead of great; weak withal, as in a state of convulsion, not strong in a state of composure. . . ." Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution* (Belloc ed., 1906), vol. 2, p. 169

Even Lamartine, in the course of defending the Girondins, expresses his distaste of the Jacobin painter and politician, especially for his role in the Terror beginning with the murder of the King:

> ". . . One person only behaved with brutality: and that was the painter David, who was recognized by the King as he looked at him from the entrance. Louis asked him if he should soon have completed his portrait. 'I will never for the future paint the portrait of a tyrant,' replied David, 'until his head lies before me on the scaffold.' (*Je ne ferai désormais le portrait d'un tyran, que quand sa tête posera devant moi sur un échafaud.*) The King looked down and was silent at this brutal insult. David mistook his moment: a bold word before tyranny becomes cowardice in the presence of a reversal of fortune. . . ." A. de Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins* (1847; ed. 1908), vol. II, p. 359; *History of the Girondists* (tr. Ryde, 1847), p. 68.

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> cause. If any among them should by any fortuitous occurrence be snatched from their columns, and reach once more the bank of safety, he becomes confounded with the immensity of his dangers. Looking fore and aft, he trembles at what he has passed, and is petrified with the idea of what he had to go through. Eternal sorrow and repentance cloud the remainder of his days. . . .

Clearly, the alternating outbursts of melancholy and of resentment, rooted in his need for retribution and his longing to forget, continued to hold Henry Yorke back from rising to a higher level of abstraction, to an historical dimension of comparative ideology, or to a philosophical idea of the tragic sense of the revolutionary life. His own autobiography was too much with him, understandably enough; and he was convinced that the truth lay in the details, more details. He wanted history, not metaphysics.

This much he would concede: that "this disease of the human understanding, this rapid transit from humanity to fierceness, merits the most serious investigation. . . ." Yet where should one begin if not with the personal drama itself?

> . . . Metaphysicians may write whole volumes in attempting to account for it, but unless they had been actors in some of the scenes, they cannot develop them with fidelity. It is an undertaking that belongs exclusively to experience, and I am happy to add that such a work will soon appear. . . .

He doesn't say from whom; nor do we know when or whether it ever appeared. One can only wonder if it would have deeply altered the story as we already know it from a generation of English ideologists for whom ideology was exclusively the politics of experience, erratic, instructive and avoidable.

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NOTES & TOPICS

For Louis Althusser

By Sidney Hook

LOUIS ALTHUSSER'S book *Pour Marx* has now made its way from Paris to London in an English translation, and to New York in an American paperback.[1] It consists of a series of essays written during the 1960s on various aspects of Marxism by a French Communist philosopher who is proud of his doctrinal and political orthodoxy as defined by the French Communist Party.

The author discloses in the special preface to his English readers that his ideas are directed towards two fronts. The first is "to draw a line of demarcation" between Marxist theory, properly understood as a scientific and objective body of knowledge, and "empiricism and its variants", which the author interprets, for reasons not altogether clear, as a form of subjectivism. Empiricism threatens Marxism by its pluralism which is incompatible with every kind of organic unity, and consequently by its reliance upon piecemeal evidence to test theories. The object of the second "intervention" is sharply to distinguish between Marxist science and philosophy, on the one hand, and recent reinterpretations of Marxism which present it not as an economic-historical theory but as "a philosophy of man" or a "Humanism" essentially moral and psychological, holding out the promise of final liberation to human beings from all institutions that alienate them from their essential being. This is an attempt to vindicate the Marx of *Capital* against a flock of new interpreters who find the true Marx in his early writings, especially those entitled *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844).

With respect to the second intervention Louis Althusser's position seems to me to be quite justifiable, and even refreshing in view of the many fashionable attempts to show that Marx was a Marxist when he was still a Young Hegelian and Feuerbachian. But the grounds which Althusser offers for his position are needlessly obscure. Nowhere does he state clearly the scholarly evidence which bears on the purely historical question whether reading the mature Marx into the young Marx or the young Marx into the mature Marx is tenable. This evidence is very weighty and cannot be overridden by the occasional references to "alienation (*Entfremdung*)" in the later manuscripts of Marx. For it is clear that in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx had not yet developed his theory of historical materialism. Without an acceptance of historical materialism, belief in Marxism would be comparable to an avowal of Catholicism without a belief in Christianity. Indeed the view expressed in these early writings that private property is caused by alienation is as far from historical materialism as anything can be. Since the latter doctrine entails the view that human nature is historically and culturally determined, to speak of man's *essential* nature as a universal unhistorical norm against which *historical* man at any given time is to be judged, is flatly incompatible with anything that deserves the name of Marxism. "My analytical method does not start from Man but from the economically given social period," wrote Marx in 1879. To make of Marxism primarily an ethical doctrine rather than a scientific social and economic theory is not only to ignore the fact that the ethical approach was common coin among the Feuerbachians and "True Socialists," as well as other critics of industrialism, but that Marx expressly criticised the attempt to organise a revolutionary movement based on ethical socialism. However, the validity of Marx's criticism of ethical socialism—and the adequacy of his own views on ethics—is another question.

ALTHUSSER'S DIFFERENTIATION between the young and mature Marx, although quite defensible, appears to me to be based not so much on the evidence as on political piety towards the views of Marx which obtain in the Russian and French Communist Parties. Althusser's reading of Marx is not only obscure but high-handed and circular to boot. He does not recognise the possibility of an objective, scholarly, and valid interpretation of the meaning of Marx's texts *independently* of whether or not one accepts the truth of Marxism. He contends that "the pre-condition of a reading of Marx" is an *acceptance of* the Marxist view of the relation between theories and history. "The application of Marxist theory to Marx himself appears to be the absolute pre-condition of an understanding of Marx" (p. 38). This is very much as if one were to claim that one could not possibly understand Catholicism or a Catholic thinker unless one were a Catholic oneself.

Indeed, it is even more absurd. For although a Catholic might claim that there is an infallible

[1] *For Marx*. By LOUIS ALTHUSSER. Translated by BEN BREWSTER. Allen Lane, £2.50; Vintage Books, $1.95.

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authority that can lay down in cases of conflict the true Catholic doctrine, there is no canonic authority, as yet, on the true Marxist approach which will finally pronounce on the meaning of Marx. One need no more be a Platonist to understand Plato than a Marxist to understand Marx. This is rejected as uninspired, commonsensical, undialectical thought by Althusser. Marx and Marx alone grasped the way in which philosophy " 'represents' the class struggles in the realm of *Theory*, hence philosophy is neither science nor a pure theory . . . but a *political practice of intervention* in the realm of theory" (p. 256). It follows from this (although Althusser seems too abashed to draw the explicit conclusion) that one must be a Marxist of the right persuasion not only to understand Marx but also to understand every other philosopher. This is reminiscent of the Soviet Stalinist doctrine of the 1930s (Rudas and Mitin) that one must be a member of the Communist Party following the correct political line, as laid down by the Politbureau, in order to understand dialectical materialism.

IN HIS ATTEMPT TO VINDICATE Marxism from criticisms made by positivist and empirical critics who argue that if "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" (Engels) history has made a shambles of the theory of historical materialism, Althusser goes to heroic lengths. In his essay on "Contradiction and Overdetermination" he grapples with the charge that the Russian October Revolution constitutes, if anything, a disproof of the view that the mode of economic production determines the political and cultural superstructure of a society. He valiantly defends Lenin's contention that if capitalism is considered as a world system it breaks down at its "weakest link," Czarist semi-feudal Russia constituting its weakest link. He denies that the revolutionary situation and outcome in Russia were really exceptions to the historical materialist rule. On the contrary, they clarify and confirm the rule. On his analysis the Russian Revolution was the inescapable outcome of a vast and intense accumulation of "contradictions." Far from being a historical fluke, a disconfirming instance of the overriding causal importance of the mode of economic production, in Althusser's view the Bolshevik triumph was "over-determined." Given the conjuncture of all the contradictions, it could not, so to speak, *not be*. I shall examine this analysis in a moment but before doing so it is instructive to observe that Althusser ignores some obvious difficulties in the Leninist emendation, or revision, of Marx that he here so uncritically accepts.

First, if capitalism is considered as a world economic system, and if it is true, as Marx insisted, that no social order ever disappears until

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all its productive forces have been developed, then the tremendous expansion of the forces of production during the last fifty years is evidence that capitalism as a world system had *not* broken down, and that attempts to seize power in a backward country, potentially capable of great capitalist expansion, could not be justified on the basis of historical materialism.

Secondly, capitalism was already a world system during the days of Marx and Engels, and both repeatedly asserted that the socialist revolution would come in the industrially and politically *advanced* countries of the West. They would have dismissed as "revolutionary adventurism"

Ernst Fischer's Testament:*——

AUSTRIA *may well be "a little world used as a testing-ground by the big world." But it is a relatively happy country; the contrast between poverty and wealth is not so glaring as elsewhere. Wages are not so high and work is not so intensive as in more industrial countries, but people are better off than in most other places. The "Wages and Prices Parity Commission" has transformed class enemies into "social partners." There are fewer strikes, demonstrations, and mass movements than elsewhere. People prefer gradual and piecemeal reforms and are reluctant to take on major change. We have become habituated to this* Reich der Mitte, *to middle-of-the-road positions and moderation. Mikoyan, the Soviet politician, once referred to Austria as "almost paradise."*

I have to admit it: it is fortunate for this country that it did not go Communist. The Czechs and the Hungarians envy us. So—was it wrong, the cause for which I and so many of my friends fought? Was it wrong to be a Communist?

IF I HESITATE before answering the question, this is not merely because it is distasteful to have to face admitting a life-long error. Surely it would be easier to count one's blessings and repudiate everything that I was, that I thought, and that I wanted, rather than reconstruct the great game of politics move by move in order to establish where the error lay.

When I now look at myself as an intellectual and weigh up my weaknesses, my advantages and my opportunities, I was not merely wrong to have been a Communist; I was wrong to be a politician at all, to try to project myself into a social role foreign to my nature, to wear that mask.

But can the ego—one's own personality, feelings, and desires—constitute an absolute standard of values? In this age in which we live could any man worthy of the name fail to take sides and, if so, to be a Communist? A Communist—even to the limit beyond which one is being untrue to one's own and the community's purposes?

AFTER THE SHOW TRIALS *in Moscow, after the Slansky trial, after the suppression of the Hungarian rising, after the revival of the old "Stalinist" methods, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army, one could have acted impulsively and made the break with the Soviet Union. The stage at which different individuals may be driven to do this depends upon the answer to the following questions. Were all these crimes perversions of Communism—or were they an inherent, an essential part of its nature? Are such aberrations inevitable, or could they have been avoided? Were the aims wrong? Are the methods mistaken? Can the ultimate result, up till now so discouraging, ever be set right?*

There are stalwart Marxists who base their case on history. Capitalism, they say, began with every form of inhumanity—but still it was historically progressive. It produced historic advances in technology, science, productivity, and civilisation—if only for the benefit of a privileged minority. Is that which is euphemistically called "socialism" any different if used for the same purposes?

ALL THE SOVIET UNION'S SUCCESS STORIES deal with cement, with iron and steel, with hydro-electric dams, power stations and rockets—never with human beings, with simple men and women. Possession by the Soviet Union of more missiles and submarines than the United States is no excuse for the fact that the masses are still in want, and that artists and intellectuals are being placed in straitjackets in miserable lunatic asylums. To counter-argue with reference to the injustice, oppression, and dishonesty of the capitalist world merely degrades the socialist ideal to the same level. It does not alter that fact that Grigorenko and other champions of human rights in Russia are held in prisons, madhouses and concentration camps—whereas in California Angela Davis was set free. It does not alter the fact that Marx spoke of "a society in which the free development of each is based on the freedom of all. . . ."

Are not, therefore, all our Communist manifestos with all those abstractions about freedom, socialism,

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***Ernst Fischer**, who died in Vienna last year (at the age of 73) in the middle of a dramatic, if familiar, intellectual transition, was a famous Marxist and a life-long Communist—until his expulsion from the Party for having called the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in '68 "a crime against socialism." Penguin has published his *The Necessity of Art: a Marxist Approach* (1970), and Allen Lane *Art against Ideology* (1969) and his (with Franz Marek) *Lenin in his Own Words* (1972). Molden-Verlag in Vienna will be publishing his autobiography later this year.

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attempts to introduce socialism in any country in independence of its economic presuppositions.

Third, there is no way, if the economic factor is not given preponderance, to determine *in advance of the outcome* which country actually is the weakest link. If the revolution by a peculiar conjuncture of circumstances had succeeded in Spain, or Turkey, or any other industrially backward country, *that* would have been evidence of its being the weakest link. The conclusion that Russia was in actuality the weakest link follows only from the fact that the Bolsheviks triumphed. It is not a discovery but a tautology, formulated after the fact.

"Was It All In Vain?"

and the rights of man all mere verbiage? Are not utopian visions of the future mere distortions of reality, a pursuit of vast erroneous ideas which distort our thinking? Does not any ideology, or any fundamental social ideal, amount to "false consciousness?"

Has not yesterday's magic become today's Golgotha? What is utopia but tomorrow's dance of death, and our "principle of hope" an insatiable vampire? We can go still further. For Baudelaire the realities of life were love and death, *la femme fatale*, the shock of passion, the melancholy of the *"jamais!"* Is not this where the egoist finds his true pleasure, full self-satisfaction undisturbed by reality?

The pragmatist, who never looks beyond the immediate issues, finds it easy to pour scorn on us as the dupes of an illusion, the harlequins of terror or the lackeys of an unacknowledged imperialism. Our well-wishers call us naive, our ill-wishers, deceivers (or, at best, self-deceivers).

WHEN I CAMPAIGNED *so pertinaciously in* 1945 *for a mixed economy, with the nationalisation of banks, key industries, and the commanding heights of the economic system, I did so not merely on economic grounds or to unite all the forces of the nation in reconstruction. I had a general concept of a society in which there would be a place both for the individual and the communal, in which the good of all and of each individual would overlap. I was—and still am—convinced that nationalisation alone is only a first step towards socialisation, that multifarious forms of community authority and voluntary association are essential to guarantee democratic co-determination by all in the production, in the aims and the manner of distribution of the things we produce. Such a development might well have been conceivable in a country like Austria—which was never a dependent nation, and was not for a long time intimately involved in power politics. Combining obstinacy with neutrality, Austria emerged from the Cold War as a land of relative internal equilibrium, a model of infinite possibilities. But can a little country stand aside from the general, unhappy course of historical events?*

"Little countries" and Kleinstaaterei *were once words of abuse in the eyes of the old national-democratic revolutionaries, and they still are so for the protagonists of European unity and integration. Nevertheless there is no blinking the fact that today small countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark or Holland—and also Austria, Finland and Switzerland—have a greater (though economy-sized) degree of democracy than the big powers. But they do not determine the general course of events in our time.*

WITHOUT THE IMAGINATION *which anticipates the future, we shall only be rushing to our doom at supersonic speed. Already we seem to be drowning in a sea of high prices and dishonesty. What progress! To enable desperadoes, merchants, arms-dealers, pop stars, and aircraft hijackers to "make their killing", bigger and better than ever before, the atmosphere is drained of oxygen, we live in terror or anxiety, our countryside is desecrated by monstrous machines. And all without the imagination that could bring some hope! Mere commonsense, mere business as usual, would not have brought about many of today's little reforms; the driving force behind them was fear of revolution.*

Today, however, is it not an imaginative grasp—not so much of hope as of human fear—that the world requires? The dust raised by mechanical progress is returning to earth as a noisome poison, as a veritable plague. Only by analysis based on reasonable or scientific argument can we who are alive today ensure and insist that we leave something worthwhile to those who come after us; by dispersing the murderous poisons given off by deadly waste products, by repudiating the senseless forms of greed in an acquisitive society.

I have always, again and again, persisted in my hope that communism could correct the errors of its ways. In 1969, when I was seventy years old, I was expelled from my party because I would not desist from condemning the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia and her non-socialist great-power-politics. I am still not prepared to abandon das Prinzip Hoffnung, *"the principle of hope", even though it has become ever more difficult for hope to hold out against its critics.*

Ernst Fischer

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Finally, and most decisive, even granting Althusser every methodological freedom to revise Marx, he can at best only establish that capitalism will break down at its weakest link. He cannot plausibly assert that according to Marx's doctrine of historical materialism *socialism can be built up and developed* at that link in the absence of all its economic presuppositions. But Althusser emphatically asserts that socialism and the classless society do exist in the Soviet Union. If so, does it not seem as if Althusser has not only revised but abandoned Marx despite his protestations of orthodoxy? Regardless of this, one has a right to require of any Marxist scholar who maintains that a socialist economy exists in the Soviet Union, an explanation of why it does not constitute a disproof of the cardinal doctrine of historical materialism as a universal historical generalisation. For here we have a clear case of politics determining the economic substructure, not *vice versa*. At any rate Althusser does not indicate what empirical evidence he is prepared to accept as indicating the invalidity of the doctrine of historical materialism. Is it refutable at all? He can hardly believe it to be true *a priori*.

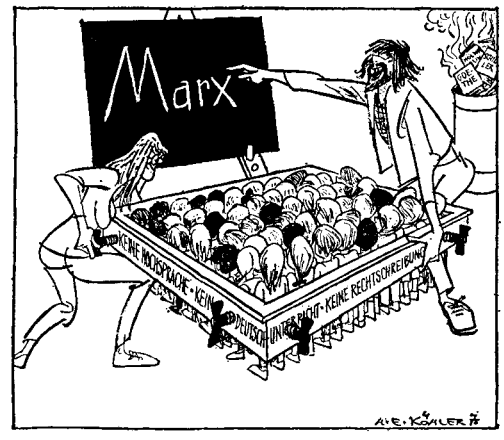
ONE WONDERS ABOUT THIS, however, when his analysis of the Bolshevik victory of October 1917 is examined. According to Althusser this victory was determined by all the "contradictions" present, economic and others. But no attempt is made to derive the presence of all the other contradictions from the "basic" economic one. Indeed the view that they are so derivable is dismissed as a simple and illegitimate inversion of Hegel. How, then, explain the actual historical upshot of the operation of all the structural and superstructural forms, together with the specific events and personalities, involved?

Even as a heuristic approach it is useless to the historian—for all it tells him is that events are related to some other events, not how they are related.

For all his objections to the Hegelianising of Marx, Althusser himself lapses into a kind of vulgar Hegelianism—to save himself from acknowledging that causal attributions to the mode of economic production, although illuminating many aspects of political and social life (including the range of alternatives open to man) fall far short of explaining the specific choices made among them as well as the relatively autonomous developments that emerge independently of them. And this not only in the spheres of culture but in politics and history as well. Nor is Althusser the only expositor of Marxism who is guilty of this methodological backsliding. It is apparent in dukács, the later Sartre, and a shoal of lesser commentators.

Too sophisticated to follow Engels in his crude references to "the ultimate" factor as revealed "in the last analysis", to circumvent the plain evidence that the *proximate* causes of some major events have often little to do with the mode of economic production, they substitute the systematic totality of social relationships (dukács and Sartre) together with the relationships of physical nature (Althusser) to account for the specific phenomenon in question. The result, when not unintelligible verbiage, is often a far-fetched and arbitrary correlation. It has no more explanatory significance for specific events and structures than the invocation of God's Will or Wisdom. It assumes the presence of a dialectically organised totality in which the phenomenon in question is embedded. It never shows that such an all-inclusive totality is required to make sense of what is found, and especially to predict what will occur. It is wise only *after* the event. Aside from its failure to pass the test of any genuinely scientific theory, it fails to explain (if this view is fathered on Marx) in what sense Marx can be considered a materialist and an historical materialist. To Hegelianise Marx is only a little less absurd than to Christianise him as the St Louis "Maoist-Jesuit" group has done.

Every undogmatic historian is aware of the multitude of contingent events that entered into the victory of the Bolshevik revolution. Lenin hardly expected, a short year before the February revolution, that his party would seize power, and that after the seizure of power it would remain in power. Even Leon Trotsky acknowledged (albeit reluctantly) that without Lenin there would have been no October. Before April 1917 the



NEW GERMAN SPELLING-BEE
"Now here's a word that calls for a capital letter?..."
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

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leaders of the Bolshevik Party were supporting Kerensky.[2]

Althusser is aware of the unique and exceptional collocation of forces, "contradictions" and events that resulted, despite their "radical heterogeneity," in the Russian Revolution. But not all his historical Marxist piety—and it seems unlimited—can produce anything more than the evidence that it was possible, and a remote possibility at that. As a Marxist, however, Althusser claims that it was *historically necessary*. The nearest he comes to this is the assumption, implied but never explicitly stated, that any historical result is determined by the state of the world which precedes it, a postulate compatible with the non-occurrence as well as the occurrence of the October Revolution. For all his talk about the necessity of "rigour" and "a rigorous conception of Marxist concepts, their implications and their development," this collection of essays is singularly free of it. It suffers from tergiversation, and terminological distinctions that are more ingenious than relevant to an objective understanding and evaluation of Marx's thought.

SPACE DOES NOT PERMIT more than a brief mention of Althusser's exposition and defence of dialectical materialism which he regards as the general theory of scientific practice.

This philosophy, which is not a science, and which "represents the class struggle in the realm of theory", is declared to be "indispensable" to the development of all the sciences including the natural sciences. Althusser does not describe the impact of dialectical materialism on the development of the natural sciences in the Soviet Union, and the continuous purge of science and scientists undertaken in its name. But since he explicitly denies that there is any dictatorship in the U.S.S.R. (p. 222) since "antagonistic classes have disappeared", and assures us that "the State is no longer a class state but the State of the whole people (of everyone): in the U.S.S.R. men are indeed now treated without any class distinction, that is, as *persons*", he probably would deny that dialectical materialism has served as a premise to justify purges of science and scientists. The excesses of the terror can always be blamed

[2] The extent to which Lenin was responsible not only for the construction of the Communist Soviet régime but for the forging of the Russian Communist Party, and the founding of the Comintern, has recently been developed in masterly detail by Lazitch and Drachkovitch in Vol. 1 of their *Lenin and the Comintern* (Hoover Institution Press, 1966.)

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on "the cult of personality", on Stalin, but never on Lenin: the normal or endemic terror is "socialist humanism."

Althusser's defence of Marx seems more cruel and unjust to Marx than the indictments by most of Marx's critics.

Of Russian Origin

On Manya Harari—By MAX BELOFF

THE RUSSIAN-JEWISH COLONY in London in the inter-War years which was part of the émigré world created by the Revolution of 1917 was less remarkable no doubt than its Berlin or Paris counterparts. Yet it did contain some remarkable people and was for however brief a period—there are few traces of it now—a social entity with some specific and recognisable atmosphere. In that colony, the Benensons because of their wealth and previous position in Russia were an important family. Yet Manya Harari, the youngest daughter of the head of the family, was not part of that world. At the age of 19 she went on a holiday to Jerusalem, there met the British official she later married, and then spent a number of years in Cairo. More important still was the fact that in 1932 she was received into the Roman Catholic church.

It is, I think, difficult for non-Jews (perhaps even for Jews of a younger generation) to realise what actual conversion to Christianity on the part of one of its members meant at that time to the Jewish community. Abandonment of religious observances—even marriage outside the faith—these might, it is true, deeply affect those immediately concerned. But conversion was another thing altogether. One remembers the shock which the news of Sir Lewis Namier's conversion to Russian Orthodoxy gave to those with whom he had worked so devotedly in the Zionist movement. Manya Harari was not so important a figure, but she was a Benenson. To become a Catholic meant in some way to diminish the meaning of Jewish martyrdom. It was after all the fight not to accept the majority religion that had been at the centre of the Jewish diaspora's long struggle for survival. How could one opt out of one's heritage?

I hasten to add that this resentment towards apostasy could be felt even by Jews who had no religious prejudice in the ordinary sense of the word, who were perfectly content that Christians should be Christians, who were prepared for the fullest degree of social and intellectual association with believing Christians but for whom apostasy was morally intolerable because incomprehensible. I suspect that things are different now, except for those Jews for whom their own religion carries a positive content. The rest may feel that Israel provides a new form of assurance for the Jewish future, that martyrdom has taken on a different meaning since the holocaust which did not define Jews by the test of the synagogue, for the Grand Inquisitor has been replaced by Adolf Hitler.

But forty years ago it did not look like that. And one of the many reasons for which one regrets that Manya Harari did not live to add to the fragment of autobiography with which this book[1] begins is that it does not deal with her conversion or the reasons which induced her to take this step; one would so like to understand. There are clues perhaps in the obvious emptiness from the Jewish viewpoint of the St Petersburg childhood she so lovingly describes, and in the attractions of the churches and their rituals stimulated by Christian nurses and servants—more real to her than the Kishenev pogrom or the Bayliss trial. It is clear also that on her first visit to Palestine she saw no basic opposition between her religious feelings and the Zionist and Kibbutz movements in those pioneering days of the mid-1920s. When she went back to Jerusalem in 1934, her Zionism which was never political had ceased to be in the forefront of her vision:

> By then, I was a Catholic and I saw the paradox of the City of Peace, always at war, the fountain of living water built so high that every summer there was a drought. I saw the holy places, the quarrelling sects and all the rest girded with the Passion. I felt that to be a Christian Jew in Palestine was most fitting. I thought the link between the Jews and Palestine sacramental.
>
> I went there once more in 1948. What drew me to Jerusalem under siege? Was the barbed wire across the town the crown of thorns. . . .?

These are not Jewish images; and they end the autobiographical fragment. To it the editors have added to begin with a diary of this 1948 visit

[1] *Memoirs 1906–1969*. By MANYA HARARI. Harvill Press, £3.50.

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which gives a brief but vivid and sympathetic picture of the infant State of Israel at war. But despite Manya Harari's willingness to share in the risks and hardships of those days, it was clear that she was in process already of becoming an outsider. Israel is not a country for a Christian Jew, though it can and often does appeal to other Christians; it is perhaps not surprisng that she never returned.

WHAT IS MORE SURPRISING and what gives interest to the book beyond the circle of Manya Harari's friends is that, having renounced Israel as it were, she became increasingly concerned with the Russian aspect of her identity despite the fact that she had left Russia in 1914 as a girl of eight. She became well-known for her work as a publisher in making contemporary Russian literature known in England in translation, and of course as the co-translator (with Max Hayward) of its most celebrated single work—*Dr Zhivago*. Perhaps the fact that Boris Pasternak (baptised in infancy) was another Christian Jew gave this work a special poignancy for her.

The remainder of this volume, suitably styled *"Retour aux Sources"*, consists of three diaries of visits to Russia in 1955, 1956, and 1961. The first two of these were made in connection with business negotiations in connection with literary rights and translations, and contain an account of the ways in which the Russians handled Western business visitors at that time well enough written to evoke a sharp sense of recognition on the part of anyone who has had to deal with the curious mixture of inefficiency and suspicion that makes "cultural contacts" so frustrating a concept in the Russian context.

But although all this is interesting enough, the heart of the diaries lies on the personal side, in the author's effort after forty years to see the scenes of her childhood: the now much subdivided St Petersburg apartment, and the family country estate at Redkino some hundred miles away where even after the German occupation much of the old house was standing and partly in use as the local school. But the challenge was not merely one to memory. What Manya Harari wished to do was clearly to identify herself with her Russian background, and to use her knowledge of the language and the people to melt into it, to get off the beaten track wherever she might be and above all to make contact with the ordinary Russian people—to penetrate the curtain that Intourist and the rest of officialdom strives so hard to keep intact—the real iron curtain not between countries but between individuals.

In pursuit of this objective, Manya Harari underwent some discomforts, some unpleasantnesses and some disappointments; yet she did penetrate as no English visitor could into something of the mental world of which the casual Western tourist has so little inkling. It may be different now, as conditions have become less austere, as the War recedes, as Russian youth acquires a taste for the world of Western consumption—but in the 1950s and early '60s material conditions remained severe and what joy there was to be found in life could only spring from satisfaction with the simple gifts of nature and family affection. All else was bleak beyond believing.

MANYA HARARI was a warm and friendly person as well as a talented writer; her descriptions of train journeys and people's homes have an etched quality; the conversations she reports ring true. One's knowledge of Russia is enlarged. Yet the basic equivocation is unresolved. The kind of people she met, particularly in villages and small towns, were obviously not so different from what they would have been in the days of her childhood; but except as workers on the estate or as house servants, she and her family would not have met or mixed with them. The Benensons were rich and Jewish; the Russians among whom Manya Harari was looking for her roots were neither. The Revolution has happened, and the gesture of "going to the people" belongs to an earlier and more innocent age in Russian history.

Perhaps we might have had Manya Harari's own interpretation of these experiences had her plan for the memoirs been fulfilled; as it is the book leaves one vaguely dissatisfied, raising questions that it cannot answer; a memorial to a remarkable and much-loved woman but tantalising in its final incompleteness.

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Four Fluent Fellows

An Essay on Chesterton's Fiction—By KINGSLEY AMIS

CHESTERTON'S first book of fiction, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904), is in outline, and on the face of it, a romance about the future. The date indicated is 1984, but this coincidence, though doubtless odd, is unilluminating. Those twin concerns, to diagnose the contemporary world and through doing so to sound a warning about what it may turn into, characterise Orwell's novel and much orthodox science fiction besides; they find no more than a very incidental place in the Chesterton work. This indeed opens with an attack on prophecy and shows us, first, a society "almost exactly like what it is now", then, later, a creation of pure and free fancy. (We could capture the book for science fiction only by taking what C. S. Lewis called "the German view" that any and every romance about the future must fall within that category.)

The product of Chesterton's fancy is a London in which, by a kind of reversion to a medievalism that never existed, the various boroughs, while owing ultimate allegiance to the Crown, become independent city-states. Each has its Provost with his attendant group of heralds, its flag, its citizen-soldiery—armed with no more than sword and halberd—in their distinctive uniforms, its manufactured traditions and mottoes, its ambition and honour. Notting Hill, having ignominiously defeated an aggressive coalition of Bayswater and the Kensington boroughs, acquires a twenty-years' hegemony over all London, only to perish by a combined final onslaught, a set battle in Kensington Gardens.

This sounds like a straightforward, if idiosyncratic, chronicle of adventure and action. In fact, it is both more and less than that, a verdict that may prove not quite so hideously dull as it sounds if I amplify it by suggesting that in this first novel are to be found all its author's important concerns as a writer of fiction, concerns at times cumulative and mutually helpful to marvellous effect, now and then disastrously at odds, but concerns that always recur in his tales and give them their unique flavour and place in the canon.

The preludial attack on prophecy mentioned above consists of some sensible and provocative remarks couched in, often buried under, a style that wavers from the jocular to the facetious. Two concerns are at work here, or, to put it perhaps more appropriately, two men: Chesterton the Polemicist and Chesterton the Buffoon.

THE POLEMICIST, thickly or thinly disguised, turns up virtually everywhere in Chesterton's fiction, and it must be said of him at once that he is rarely less than entertaining and often lends argument an elegance and an epigrammatic sting worthy of the best of the author's avowed polemical writing. Here, the argument is about nationalism and politics generally, it is conducted from more than one point of view, and most of it has nothing to do with the rest of the story; indeed, after the principal debate one of its chief participants, Juan del Fuego, a Venezuelan grandee about as authentic as his name, is reported to have dropped dead. Right at the end of the book, the Polemicist puts in a secondary appearance to advance the not very inflammatory point that the humorist and the idealist, or the clown and the fanatic, are the two essential parts of the whole, sane man.

The clownish half of this synthesis corresponds to the figure I have called the Buffoon, to some tastes a mildly dismaying companion. He is actually incarnated in the character of Auberon Quin, an owlish minor civil servant who finds himself elected King—by what must have been a very arbitrary process. Until then he has been able to do little more than mystify and bore his friends with a string of elaborately pointless anecdotes; now he can mystify and bore all the people of London by decreeing that they build walls round their municipalities and parade in grotesque costumes sounding tocsins. At last—rather late, in fact—there appears a man who takes the whole charade seriously.

This is Adam Wayne, the youthful Provost of Notting Hill, tall, blue-eyed and red-haired. Red hair in Chesterton's men is a badge of unworld-

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liness and chivalry (in his women it belongs to the sedate and serious-minded). Here we have the fanatical half of the synthesis, and at this point, too, a third Chesterton takes a hand in the shaping of the story. Aware of the deficiencies of the title, I dub the newcomer Chesterton the Melodramatist, meaning no disparagement, intending only to allude to that fusion of the grand and the histrionic, the magnificent and the magniloquent, which we find in the poems of Housman or the music of Tchaikovsky, and which we can respond to, even be deeply moved by, without necessarily ranging it alongside the work of Tennyson or Beethoven.

BUT LET THE Melodramatist speak. He does much of his work in dialogue, though he also operates through the heroic gesture, the stroke of symbolism, through *coup de théâtre* and *peripeteia* and transformation scene. (Wayne has interrupted a royal audience where the provosts of the Kensington boroughs—Buck, Barker, *et al.*—are petitioning the King to sanction a new development scheme which will swallow up Pump Street, an unimportant corner of Notting Hill cluttered with dingy toyshops, etc.)

> . . . Buck said, in his jolly, jarring voice: "Is the whole world mad?" The King sprang to his feet, and his eyes blazed.
> "Yes," he cried, in a voice of exultation, "the whole world is mad, but Adam Wayne and me. . . . He has answered me back, vaunt for vaunt, rhetoric for rhetoric. He has lifted the only shield I cannot break, the shield of an impenetrable pomposity. Listen to him. You have come, my Lord, about Pump Street?"
> "About the city of Notting Hill," answered Wayne proudly. "Of which Pump Street is a living and rejoicing part."
> "Not a very large part," said Barker, contemptuously.
> "That which is large enough for the rich to covet," said Wayne, drawing up his head, "is large enough for the poor to defend."
> The King slapped both his legs, and waved his feet for a second in the air.
> "Every respectable person in Notting Hill," cut in Buck, with his cold, coarse voice, "is for us and against you. I have plenty of friends in Notting Hill."
> "Your friends are those who have taken your gold for other men's hearthstones, my Lord Buck," said Provost Wayne. "I can well believe they are your friends."
> "They've never sold dirty toys, anyhow," said Buck, laughing shortly.
> "They've sold dirtier things," said Wayne, calmly; "they have sold themselves."
> "It's no good, my Buckling," said the King, rolling about on his chair. "You can't cope with this chivalrous eloquence. You can't cope with an artist. . . . "[1]

[1] I suspect that Chesterton meant to give the first speech quoted to Barker and the fourth to Buck. He might mix up names but he would probably not have given the same character two incompatible voices.

Even the couple of intrusions by the Buffoon, even the occasional lapses into the idiom of a lower kind of melodramatic writing, cannot hold back the speed and zest of that exchange, the confidence with which the unvarnished adverbs—proudly, contemptuously—are slapped down, and Buck and Barker are made to toss up their slow lobs for instant, unreturnable despatch. At this stage, the nature of the book changes: a little further on, the King tells Wayne, "I tried to compose a burlesque, and it seems to be turning half-way through into an epic." After making every allowance for the fact that novelists move by unanalysable instinct at least as much as by conscious thought, it still remains tempting to hear the author's voice in the King's remark, owning up to a belated change of mind.

The epic admittedly ticks over for a few pages while something is said about Wayne's "mental condition"; not a great deal, hardly more in quantity than is needed to show what it is and how he attained it. No one doubts that Chesterton was deeply interested in people and their relations with one another, but at least in his fiction—parts of his literary criticism may be a different matter—he does not go in much for "characterisation" as it is normally thought of, for differentiating, developing, showing response to circumstance. Adam Wayne has just got to be extraordinary so that he will speak and act as he does.

He acquired his fanatic's brand of local patriotism as a child, we are told: not in the humdrum sense that it all started early, but in that he was most fully a child when he discovered what Notting Hill meant to him. Chesterton never introduced a character who is and remains a child, but his tales are full of insights into childhood, celebrations of it and of the disregarded truth that the adult who has missed or rejected any part of what it is to be a child is a sad, stunted creature. In another novel he speaks of "that concrete and material poetry which a child feels when he takes a gun upon a journey or a bun with him to bed." (I can still remember the gentle shock of reading that sentence for the first time, the flash of realisation, not that you fully understand the author, but, far rarer and more memorable, that the author knows all about you.) More directly, Father Brown explains why a naval lieutenant in full dress, and in suspicious circumstances, was brandishing his sword.

> ". . . He thought he was quite alone on the sands where he had played as a boy. If you don't understand what he did, I can only say, like Stevenson, 'you will never be a pirate.' Also you will never be a poet; and you have never been a boy."

Adam Wayne is a poet all right, in fact the poet, as well as the Napoleon, of Notting Hill: a

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poet, moreover, not only in the rather shifty, late meaning of "one with strong (or refined) feelings" about this and that. He also, it turns out, once published a book of actual poems conveying his sense of the beauty and mystery of his urban surroundings, in the spirit of more conventional poets whose subject is rural nature. The Buffoon has a finger or two in this pie, but it is another Chesterton who says of Wayne that "twenty feet from him (for he was very short-sighted) the red and white and yellow suns of the gaslights thronged and melted into each other like an orchard of fiery trees, the beginning of the woods of elf-land."

That same Chesterton is at work in an earlier passage, long before the advent of Wayne:

> The morning was wintry and dim, not misty, but darkened with that shadow of cloud or snow which steeps everything in a green or copper twilight. The light there is on such a day seems not so much to come from the clear heavens as to be a phosphorescence clinging to the shapes themselves. The load of heaven and the clouds is like a load of waters, and the men move like fishes, feeling that they are on the floor of a sea. Everything in a London street completes the fantasy; the carriages and cabs themselves resemble deep-sea creatures with eyes of flame. . . .

HERE, OBVIOUSLY, is our fourth Chesterton, one whom, again, I am chary of labelling. "Chesterton the Painter" has its attractions. It does the service of reminding us that the author started his career not as an author, but as a painter in the proper sense, or at any rate as an art student at the Slade. I wonder very much whether the pictures he produced at that time, if any, show the fascination with the effects of light which can be seen in what I have quoted and which constantly reappears throughout his novels and stories. Every such reappearance seems fresh, different from all the others; we see not only London (though we see London most and perhaps best), not only the town or the village or the castle or the inn, but countryside from the lush to the stark, salt-flat, seashore, estuary, river (light on water, as might be expected, particularly attracted him), at all times of day but with a preference for dusk and dawn, in fog, in rain, in lightning, under snow. Chesterton the Impressionist? That is about the best I can do; the title has thin but legitimate roots in the writing of the 1880s, as a glance at, say, some of Wilde's shorter poems will establish.

IN *The Napoleon of Notting Hill,* the status of Chesterton the narrator is sufficiently indicated by denying that role an initial capital. There is a story holding at any rate its second half together, there are some fine moments of military action and expectation, but the main job of the narrative is to bridge the gaps between the returns of the various other roles. The closing scene, at the end of which Wayne and Quin set off like—perhaps a bit too much like—Don Quixote and Sancho Panza to roam the world, is right, is a triumph, but it is the triumph of the Melodramatist with some useful support from the Polemicist. No self-respecting, or mere, story-teller would have permitted himself a finale so blatantly implausible; implausible not just by ordinary common-sense standards, but even by the bizarre ones of what has gone before. (A look at the text compels the unanswerable question: Where had everyone else disappeared to?)

There is the sufficiently obvious view that some narrative power must reside in any work of fiction that keeps the reader reading. I cannot decide how far it is vulnerable to the demurrer that readers are kept reading by plenty of things that are not fiction—much of Chesterton's verse, for instance. However, on this view, the Narrator earns his capital letter, and to spare, in the second novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), which is the author's fictional masterpiece. To revert to Father Brown's dictum, and perhaps to take a slightly menacing tone for the moment, if you are not kept reading by it you will never be a poet (in any sense I would accept) and you have never been a boy. At any rate, saying so gives me the chance of saying too that it would not be in order to add "or a girl" at the end of that last sentence. There are no unsympathetic female characters in Chesterton's tales; there are no developed female characters either. Sexual love, marriage, domesticity stand high and firm in the Chestertonian set of values, but they are implied, invoked, used as unargued motives or goals, not explored.

The solitary girl in *The Man Who Was Thursday* comes in in the first chapter and on the last page. At the start, she is doing what Chesterton's women spend a good half of their time doing: listening to the men talk. The men in this case are two poets called Gabriel Syme and Lucian Gregory, and they are talking about anarchism. As might be expected, the Polemicist gets a good innings here, but by the end of the chapter he has merged into the Melodramatist. The setting is a suburban garden transfigured by Chinese lanterns that glow "in the dwarfish trees like some fierce and monstrous fruit" and a strange evening sky that seems to be "full of feathers, and of feathers that almost brushed the face." The Impressionist goes on as he begins.

WHAT OUR THREE collaborators produce, working so closely in harmony that there are no incongruities, no gaps to be bridged by orthodox exposition, is of course a story, one of a kind that eludes categorisation, like Chesterton's

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other novels. *The Man Who Was Thursday* is not quite a political bad dream, nor a metaphysical adventure, nor a cosmic joke in the form of a spy thriller, but it has something of all these. It is *sui generis*.

Syme, besides being a poet who talks against anarchism, is a policeman with the job of fighting it. His credentials are franked "The Last Crusade"—I would love to see that emblazoned on some Whitehall office door. In pursuance of a sort of bet, he allows Gregory to take him to dinner in a greasy riverside pub that turns out to serve champagne and excellent lobster mayonnaise. More surprisingly, dinner-table and diners presently descend *en bloc* into an underground chamber: shades, or rather anticipations, of Ian Fleming's *Live and Let Die*.

Here a secret anarchist meeting is held; not very plausibly, but after some enjoyable and perverse rhetoric, Syme gets himself elected in place of Gregory to the Central Anarchist Council, whose members are named after the days of the week. So the man who has become Thursday sets out by moonlight, in a heavy cloak and carrying a sword-stick, to carry the war to the enemy.

At his introduction to the others on the Council, the novel starts to earn its subtitle, *A Nightmare*. They are not only hateful, they are physically monstrous in a way that seems to body forth the evil in their souls. The eyes of Saturday are covered by black glasses, as if they were too frightful to see. Monday, the Secretary, has a beautiful face with a smile that goes up in the right cheek and down in the left and is wrong. The face of Sunday, the gargantuan President, is so huge that Syme is afraid that at close quarters it will be too big to be possible, like the mask of Memnon he remembers seeing as a child in the British Museum, and he will have to scream. The Melodramatist breaks new ground here.

When the spectacles and the mask of anarchy are removed, however, Saturday is human enough, in fact another paladin of the Last Crusade. One by one the other Days declare themselves, until only the Secretary stands between police and President. But Monday is Sunday's agent, with the power of turning the world itself against the crusaders. The chase sweeps across a France of sturdy peasants and soldierly patriots and cultured men of wealth (more fun to read about, at least, than most real Frenchmen) transformed one after the other, in true nightmare fashion, into fanatical allies of anarchy. At last the only surviving champions of Christendom, and of reason and order, turn at bay.

THE END IS FANTASY on a different level. In a second chase, it is Sunday who is pursued. He is

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caught up with, but not caught; you cannot catch a being that is more than human, that represents what, were it not for Chesterton's well-known abhorrence of Shaw, I would be tempted to call the Life Force. This end sounds less than satisfactory, and it is, though not so unsatisfactory as it sounds. I can swallow it.

WHAT I FIND INDIGESTIBLE in the closing scenes is the fortunately brief reappearance of the Buffoon in the person of the fleeing Sunday, who at one point makes off mounted on a Zoo elephant and who bombards the pursuit with messages of elephantine facetiousness. I have one further cavil, in that the Impressionist sometimes gets out of hand. He is itching to describe a breakfast-party on an open balcony in Leicester Square and also a snowstorm in the London streets, so the latter is made to follow the former on the same morning. And chronology is telescoped, as it often is in Chesterton's tales, just to save time. He could not be bothered to introduce what we might now call cut-away material to imply an interim, nor even to throw in the odd dull but useful sentence merely mentioning a pause in talk, a couple of hours on the road in which nothing of interest took place. This is the sort of thing critics mean when they accuse Chesterton of not being a proper novelist. In a nightmare. the defect perhaps matters less; at any rate, unlike other such defects, it seems to matter less as soon as its presence has been fully noted.

IN THE LATER NOVELS, the Melodramatist bows himself out and, *pari passu*, the Impressionist is reduced to the status of a scene-painter: any old time of day and most places will do as background to conversation. It is the Polemicist who comes increasingly to the fore. Part of him is propagandist, the champion of Roman Catholicism against its various foes, but it is a much smaller part than people with a sketchy knowledge or recollection of the real Chesterton would have us believe. And those foes embrace, not any kind of Protestantism, but unreason, superstition, diabolism, militant rationalism, moral neutralism, Tolstoyism, anarchism, materialism, mystical cults. To enjoy the spirited peppering of most of these targets, nothing more doctrinal than a belief in reason is required. Further, the shots fly in both directions: if the outcome of the battle is never in doubt, the enemy is allowed some not always ineffectual return fire.

This interest in dialogue as against monologue comes out strongly in the third novel, *The Ball and the Cross* (1910), an undervalued and, I find, largely overlooked work. Just what sort of novel it is is once more not easy to tie down. It opens like a kind of science fiction, in the marvellous flying-machine of Professor Lucifer; its middle and main part is a blend, or alternation, of Polemicist material and a simple but vigorous action story. Atheist and Christian—the one is made as attractive a character as the other—fight it out in words and, when not prevented by officious interveners, notably policemen, with swords as well. The physical duel is inconclusive; the metaphysical comes out predictably but acceptably.

The final section is as fantastic as its counterpart in *The Man Who Was Thursday*, but this is more overtly theological: Lucifer lives up to his name in the role of superintendent of a gigantic lunatic asylum in which, were he to triumph, the mass of mankind would end up incarcerated. Chesterton's interest in madmen, which pervades his fiction, is at more than first sight surprising in so sane a writer and human being. Some of it serves his love of paradox, furnishing the man whose devotion to rationalism deprives him of his reason, the man whose devotion to reason makes him appear insane in the eyes of the illogical or the incurious. This is not the whole story, the rest of which I confess I cannot for the moment discover. But it must be stressed that Chesterton is not anticipating, would on the contrary have found devilish, current trendy notions that sanity is a relativist or quasi-political label, that there are insane societies but no insane individuals, etc.

By the time of *Manalive* (1912), the novels are in sad case. The hero, Innocent Smith—a name, like the title, that bodes no good—spends his inexhaustible leisure on projects like dropping his wife off at boarding-houses or places of business in order to re-encounter and re-woo her. As a long lecture near the close informs us flatly, this is his way of demonstrating (to whom?) his belief in the perpetual freshness of marriage. The author has to keep telling us that Smith is irrepressible and a harlequin, that "he filled everyone with his own half-lunatic life." These assertions are never demonstrated; Chesterton could not create comic incident or write funny dialogue.

THE SAME PRIMACY OF the Buffoon—for it is he—disfigures collections of stories like *Tales of the Long Bow* (1925) and *The Paradoxes of Mr Pond* (1937, posthumous). In the first, a group of buffoons conspires to produce as literal facts a series of common phrases habitually used to express unreality or impossibility. So Commander Blair builds a castle in the air—a doctored balloon; Owen Hood sets the Thames on fire—or rather ignites a layer of petrol floating on part of its surface; and what of it? The eponymous narrator

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of the other book introduces his yarns with laborious verve, such that his "paradoxes", far from being the unlooked-for truths of G.K.C. at his best, are no more than irresponsible and pointless mystifications.

Enough of the Buffoon: significantly, he makes not even the most fleeting appearance in any of the Father Brown stories. That incisive little cleric does occasionally and briefly pose as a simpleton, but always for a dead-serious purpose, and any full-grown specimen of the type he would have booted off the stage in short order.

WITH NO MORE THAN three or four exceptions, the best of Chesterton's work in the shorter form is to be found in the Brown saga. This consists of what are much closer to being detective stories than most of his other fiction is close to any accepted category. Before turning to it, I might just remark on the pertinacity, or desperation, with which he clung to the detective form in nearly all his short pieces. For a writer with little interest in, or aptitude for, narration as such, a crime or mystery plus investigation plus dénouement is a convenient clothes-horse over which all manner of diverse material can be draped. So it is with "The Trees of Pride"[2], the sixty-five pages of which involve a disappearance and a reappearance, but really describe a glorified nature-ramble.

The Impressionist (to resume) is in top form throughout the Brown stories, even those written after, say, 1918, when he had all but disappeared from the novels. In "The Sins of Prince Saradine" and "The Perishing of the Pendragons" and elsewhere he achieves some of the finest, and least regarded, descriptive writing of this century. And it is not just description; it is atmosphere, it anticipates and underlines mood and feeling, usually of the more nervous sort, in terms of sky and water and shadow, the eye that sees and the hand that records acting as one. The result is unmistakable: "That singular smoky sparkle, at once a confusion and a transparency, which is the strange secret of the Thames, was changing more and more from its grey to its glittering extreme. . . ." Even apart from the alliteration, who else could that be?

In these stories, the Polemicist and the Melodramatist are often hard to distinguish from the Impressionist and from each other. Between them, the three produce wonderfully organised puzzles that tell an overlooked truth, parables that

[2] From *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1922). Inexplicably omitted, along with three shorter stories, in the 1961 Darwen Finlayson reprint of the volume.

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touch the emotions, syllogisms that thrill the senses. No author ever invented titles that more exactly prefigure what is to follow them—"The Salad of Colonel Cray", "The Song of the Flying Fish", "The Point of a Pin", "The Wrong Shape", "The Absence of Mr Glass." There is a glint of alloy there among the pure metal, yet it seems to hold everything together in a way that nothing else could.

Now and again a solution is fudged, the criminal is unbelievably lucky, a witness is unbelievably unobservant, Father Brown sits on a clue. Now and again (a mannerism not uncommon in the other fiction) he pauses pregnantly and a feed-man obligingly throws up a "By which you mean . . .?" or a "But then you knew . . .?" so that Brown can drop his revelatory blockbuster in a voice like the roll of a drum. I admit to surges of irritation at times like these; they soon die down.

OF Chesterton's seventeen volumes of fiction, seven or eight, with another half-book or so of odds and ends, are worth keeping and rereading; not a bad score. Very well, he remains a minor master in the genre, but there he remains, in spite of the glaring fact that so much of what interested him was irrelevant or even directly inimical to fiction as we usually think of it. His reader can promise himself, at the lowest count, what Lucian Gregory promised Gabriel Syme near the beginning of *The Man Who Was Thursday*. And that is. . .? A very entertaining evening.

A Rebuke to the Timid

Auden's Essays and Aphorisms—By PETER PORTER

W. H. AUDEN'S DECISION to return to live in England for part of each year has been misrepresented in a way which has already earned some testy rebukes from the poet himself. The press and television journalists who have extended him their versions of the prodigal's welcome home have been reminded sharply enough that he thinks post-war England both vulgar and provincial. Some of its traditional virtues must be intact or he wouldn't have come back at all, whatever the chances of being mugged in New York; but he may well think of Christ Church, London and old friends as visible vestiges of the true England he has kept in his mind ever since leaving in 1938. Time after time, Auden gives us his view of family life—it is good to be born into a circle of love, to have good things to eat and to do, to learn manners and the rules of playing: but it is death, psychologically and artistically, to stay at home once one has grown up. He sees England and his own family as paradigmatic: they nourished him and loved him until he was strong enough to leave them.

In one particularly interesting foreword in this new collection, he writes, *à propos* eating habits and cooking, "what is the use of pretending one can treat the members of one's own family as ordinary human beings." But as extraordinary human beings, they will never lose their power and importance, and *Forewords and Afterwords*[1] is, in at least half of its five hundred pages, a dissertation on the English, particularly in their attitudes to class and to literature—a dissertation prepared for Americans, which accounts for some explanatory passages which upset the tone of his writing for English readers. Perhaps the most fascinating of the pieces reprinted here is his review of the autobiographies of Leonard Woolf and Evelyn Waugh, interlarded with parallels from his own early life, which he contributed to the *New Yorker* in 1965. He points out that, in addition to sharing a middle-class professional background with them, he, like Waugh, subscribes to Christian theology, and, like Woolf, to liberal and democratic political ideals. Since there has always been a vein of doomed prophecy in his work, from the earliest poems to the present-day odes against the rapists of Dame Kind (as Cyril Connolly says, this lady is the least effective of his mannered personifications), it's important to acknowledge that Auden has never adopted fashionable extremes of reaction, either politically or artistically.

Introducing Sidney Smith, he writes,

> "unattractive and shallow as one may feel so many liberals to be, how rarely on any concrete social issue does one find the liberal position the wrong

[1] *Forewords and Afterwords*. By W. H. AUDEN. Faber & Faber, £3.95.

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one. Again, how often, alas, do those very philosophers and writers who have astounded us by their profound insights into the human heart, and human existence, dismay us by the folly and worse of their judgments on the issues of everyday life."

Forewords and Afterwords, which might be called Auden's Collected Shorter Criticism, charts this liberal heartland, an eccentric Anglican place far more dependent on the real and not very liberal power of the British navy and the City of London than Auden acknowledges, and regrettably no more today than a museum for Americans to admire. If Auden couldn't stand an England where everybody in the élite knew everybody else, he still took it with him as a touchstone to New York, and has been tireless in explaining it to the world ever since. History has not robbed England of all her liberalism, though there have been some nasty bruises in such parts as immigration and racial policy. But it has taken away her power, and liberalism without power is a pretty charade. So England, in Auden's sermon, is the land of Chesterton, Beerbohm, Wilde, Mayhew, Carroll and J. R. Ackerley. Pope and Tennyson are present too, but, in general, the lesson of short views and loyalty to locality is preached at a present-day super-power from a position which is itself nostalgic for an older super-power's good sense.

Auden's great gift for aphoristic writing should not blind the reader to the strong counter-currents in his work. The Max Beerbohm essay, called, appropriately enough, "One of the Family", is highly critical of English complacency and self-congratulation. "The English have a greater talent than any other people for creating an agreeable family life: that is why it is such a threat to their artistic and intellectual life", he writes; and again, "the great cultural danger for the English is . . . their tendency to judge the arts by the values appropriate to the conduct of family life." But what are the right values—not the pedantic ones he dislikes as much as Waugh did, and not the historically based shiftings of Modernism? The doctrine of the separation of powers applies to the arts also, so presumably Christian values will not do? I think it fair to say that Auden is a passionate moralist, but that his position is confused. In a poem, such confusion is subject to a creative process which imposes unity on it: in discursive prose it may well be masked by the sheer authority of the writer's mind. This happens often when reading Auden, most frequently when he is writing about Christianity. He is so good at explaining, say, what is moving and apposite about Kierkegaard, and then, in a later essay, formulating with enviable insight and succinctness all one's doubts of the position he had already established so brilliantly. Perhaps this is what Stravinsky meant by his description

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of Auden as the only moralist whose tone he could bear. Not only does Auden seem to be acquainted with sin and temptation (though not likely to yield to it much and therefore free of inverted pharisaism), but he revisits his oracles and gets new messages. Any reader who attempted to describe the beliefs of the author of these forewords and afterwords, gathered from thirty years' occasional journalism, would start out with several certainties and end up with only a tone of voice. It is that tone of voice which is needed so much in England today—enthusiastic, informed, not afraid to say what it knows, above all intuitive. Beneath our ironies and our scepticism, we are fearfully timid. Auden in New York has not been tempted to take refuge in this family timidity and he has earned the right to rebuke those who have.

FOREWORDS AND AFTERWORDS is garnered from Auden's smaller pieces and hasn't the scope and consequence of *The Dyer's Hand.* Nor is it his own selection, being made by Edward Mendelson, of Yale University. But it can be added to *A Certain World, Letter to Lord Byron* and some of the haiku-shaped pieces of his later years to swell the total of material useful to a biographer. For many years I was devoted to Auden's saying that poets don't write autobiographies, and it still seems an excellent commandment. But it fails to take into account the perspective of memory, the mind's tail-chasing which makes an ageing man's early days closer to him than the time of his first maturity. In this way, though certain never to undertake an autobiography as such, Auden has written a good deal over the past fifteen years about the world of his childhood, schooling and adolescence. Though never confessional (in the Rousseau, not the M. L. Rosenthal sense), he is not evasive on sexual, political and social issues. Where an attitude may contain an inference for his own life, he will let it stand, if it is important. More interestingly, he has taken to developing that fascination with his own family which was first revealed in *Letter to Lord Byron.* The Waugh/Woolf/Auden review should be read by anybody seeking insight into the enormously fruitful background of English middle-class writing of the first half of the twentieth century. Is it all due to coming from families where the children were loved? If so, what of the theory that such family life stifles intellectual effort? Or should we thank the middle-class habit of sending sons to public school for the necessary leaven of alienation which makes the artist? Again, what of American Auden declaring that he had to leave England to learn the value of work? His output from 1930 to 1938 was at least as prodigious as anything later, and it was nearly all original, not editorial or commentary. But Auden's emphasis on the necessity for work is wholly admirable. Only once did I think he went too far, when, in his distaste for connoisseurship, he seemed to imply that one could appreciate art only if one made it. But Auden does not compose: would he therefore question the sincerity of his own love of music? He is forgetting the divine dispensation given to all consumers of art whose appetite is real. A connoisseur is a jaded snob, but a consumer is a child who must be fed. All artists know that there is no pleasure greater than learning that someone is enjoying the works they have made. It far surpasses learned exegesis or official recognition.

Unlike *The Dyer's Hand, Forewords and Afterwords* is not concerned continuously with poetry, or even with literature. Nor can it be kept as a reference-book of reminders of Auden's intellectual enthusiasms over the last three decades (the pieces are not printed in chronological order anyway). But, being effortlessly readable, it instructs by creating enthusiasm and arousing curiosity. If one doubts Goethe's greatness, as I hope all sane men do, then Auden will give one pause and send one to *The Italian Journey* for an experience of the sage's practical good sense. If one is priggish about cooking, religion and fairy tales, one will have to resist Auden's complex and informed insights into all three. Above all, the reader is exposed to an imagination incomparably superior to his own, but which is neither condescending nor infallible. It is a great joy to read someone who *knows,* and who takes real pleasure in expounding and categorising.

The forewords, being brief expositions of what Auden admires about an author or a subject, are more rewarding than the afterwords, reviews which can become merely chatty or simply peter out in instances. Auden is brilliant on the Protestant Mystics and on the Greeks—he even makes that utterly mysterious subject, Greek Drama, seem comparatively accessible. His peculiar view of love is expounded in several pieces, including a summary of Shakespeare's sonnets and a frank discussion of the difference between the two classes of homosexuals, "the orals who play Son-and/or-Mother, and the anals who play Wife-and/or-Husband." All abnormal sex acts, he says, are rites of ritual magic. After absorbing this, the reader is left wanting a typical Auden exegesis, complete with tabulation and aphoristic embroidery, of who does what and to whom and the significance of each action.

Every Auden book contains some new paradox which one was not prepared for. For me, this was

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his explanation of the appropriateness of eating bread and drinking wine for the supreme sacrament of the church. For such a symbol, he writes,

> "a sexual act would never do . . . it presupposes two different sexes, it divides as well as unites . . . it is not intrinsically selfish enough. Eating on the other hand is a pure act of taking. Only the absolutely necessary and the absolutely self-regarding can stand as a symbol of its opposite, the absolutely voluntary and self-forgetful."

He might have added that, by corollary, if one is trying to imagine the ultimate in obscenity, one is thrown back on something to do with eating. From *The Bacchae* to Tennessee Williams, *via* Krafft-Ebing, there is plenty of evidence of this.

PROFESSOR MENDELSON will, no doubt, have the best filing and bibliographical system America can provide. One's own memory of Auden's sporadic reviews and introductions is bound to be very incomplete. Yet one may still question Professor Mendelson's choice—more for what is left out than what is put in. I remember interesting articles on *The Anathemata* and *Cards of Identity*, both of them in issues of ENCOUNTER.[2] But one piece I do regret particularly, especially as the book it introduced is out of print; Auden's foreword to Corvo's *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, which, in addition to talking more sense in a few hundred words about this flawed cult-figure than anyone else has done in a thousand pages, included a brilliant analysis of the behaviour of paranoiacs.

[2] "A Contemporary Epic" (February 1954), "Am I that I Am?" (April 1955).

German Protestant in Guru's Clothing

Thoughts on Hermann Hesse—By ALAN BROWNJOHN

IN SOME "Notes on a Cure in Baden" towards the end of this volume of his *Autobiographical Writings*[1], Hermann Hesse (who was in his early seventies at the time) gives an account of a brief yet depressing meeting with a young seeker after truth. This young man was no acolyte, and was far from being one of those "affirmative and enthusiastic readers" who, in some well-known later words of Hesse's, had "violently misunderstood" the meaning of *Steppenwolf*. He was in fact a Taoist, zealously training himself to "remain open to all things"; but Hesse's *A Guest at the Spa*, an autobiographical work of some twenty-five years earlier (also included here), had gravely tested his resolution. Hesse had shown, in this book, an egocentricity and arrogance which it was difficult for the young man to fit into the universal harmony. The famous writer was professing a puritan distaste for *kitsch* and sensuality, yet weakly submitting to such temptations. Above all, he was being insensitive and simplistic about "the Hindu conception of oneness."

Hesse listened to these strictures, for the quarter of an hour which was all he could bear to grant to the young man. He was too weary of such molestations, by either admirers or detractors, to expend energy on suggesting humorously that his complaints showed very little of the openness of the spirit to which he aspired. Hesse was feeling too tired to point out that

> the important thing for us artists was whether, as a result of the intentions, meanings and thoughts of the author, a pattern woven of language stuff, of language yarn, emerged whose immeasurable worth stood far above the measurable worth of the content

—whatever this rather uncomfortable and unclear statement meant. At the end of the interview he went away deeply dispirited,

> hurt to the heart that I had nothing to give or to show to this genuine seeker except the mask of weary age, which reduces to unimportance judgments about oneself and one's books and even defence against such judgments.

It is only days later that he is finally able to console himself with the (quite un-ironical) reflection that when the young man turned back again to the Tao, he might find himself capable of meditating as fruitfully on Hesse's "stiff silence and withdrawal" as on any other attitude the elderly author might have taken.

This incident serves to highlight several of the ambiguities and contradictions in Hesse's curious achievement as a novelist and the reputation he has increasingly enjoyed, among the young in the United States particularly, since his death in 1962.

[1] *Autobiographical Writings*. By HERMANN HESSE. Edited and with an Introduction by THEODORE ZIOLKOWSKI. Translated by DENVER LINDLEY. Cape, £3·50.

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To this young mystic, Hesse was someone worth seeking out to argue with: something compelling in his writing had held—and yet dissatisfied—him. From his point of view the dissatisfaction was justified. Even when appearing, perhaps even striving, to do so, Hesse provides no easy, beautiful answers. He offers no comfortable orthodoxy. His mysticism is, certainly, rather less than the real thing. He manifests contradictions which the young man has spotted, to his distress. There are problems about Hesse's writings for anyone of such rigidly enlightened tendencies. There is a German Protestant in the guru's clothing.

All the same, for his own part, Hesse does leaven his impatience with the young man's protests with retrospective reverence towards his quest ("this genuine seeker"). He is altogether serious about the Tao even after he has assured himself, obscurely, that as far as his own book was concerned, the medium may have been of more value than the message. He does want to be the helpful elder even though he is distressingly aware that he may not have much to say. In all, it's a thoroughgoing mixture: confusion of purpose, rapt self-absorption, a saintly sort of disillusioned modesty. Muddied currents of this kind run throughout Hesse's writings; and such oddities and uncertainties (one expects the messages to be banally loud and clear) make his emergence as a cult figure during the last decade distinctly puzzling. Or do they? Perhaps the very conflicts and discrepancies awaken a sympathetic echo from equally diffident, self-searching readers?

WHAT HAS HESSE to offer which has made him so absorbing a figure to wide sections of a whole generation—perhaps more than just one generation? It has all happened very gradually and unobtrusively. Translations of the novels up to the middle and late 1950s made little stir. There was a small intellectual following which respected rather than enthused. Hesse's seemed an attractive but limited talent: that of an honest yet somewhat mundane self-searcher, with orientalist leanings, who rendered the same dilemmas in lucid, dignified prose over a long succession of short novels. There was, finally, the elaborate and brilliant structure of *The Glass Bead Game* (1943) which won him the Nobel Prize; but not even that intellectual and philosophical feat made him seem essential, let alone fashionable, reading.

The things that his present editor, Mr Theodore Ziolkowski, and many others, believe that Hesse is offering are quite dogmatically defined in his Introduction to the *Autobiographical Writings*. Hesse's appeal is emphatically to

> alienated youth who, unable to accept outmoded values and unwilling to sell out to the establishment, drop out of structured society in search of themselves.

It is also asserted that Hesse, with works like *Steppenwolf*, attracts

> many over-thirties . . . who have been forced by events of the past decade—war, poverty, technologization—to reassess their values, often at the risk of antagonizing friends and associates not yet shaken by the glaring discrepancy between the American "reality" and the American Dream.

Mr Ziolkowski's relation of the autobiographical pieces to the works of fiction—in some cases it is difficult to make a boundary—is concise, subtle and illuminating. But there is more to the cult than Hesse's devotion to "the timeless realm of the spirit" and the attractions of that realm for those who want to opt out of the modern world in favour of meditation. The extra dimension exists in the contradictions in Hesse, conflicts which are embedded deeply in his attitudes and make him an unsatisfactory writer for those in search of certainty.

At twelve, Hesse complied willingly with the wishes of his intensely learned, pietistic family, forsook ordinary childhood pleasures, repressed his extraordinary imagination, and devoted himself to classical learning. In three years it was all over: determination to be a writer had overcome all scholastic inclinations, set him in revolt against the puritanical régimes of his schools, and brought him to complete physical and mental breakdown. He never returned to formal education, going instead as apprentice, in turn, to a clockmaker and a bookseller. The early novels suggest the situation, the autobiographies poignantly confirm it. But, read carefully, all the writings testify to the undercurrent of conflict about this early choice and the position in which it left him in relation to family and society. *Beneath the Wheel* proscribes teachers as the enemies of genius, but a strong thread of reverence for the teacher and scholar runs on throughout Hesse, culminating in the reverence for the sages of *The Glass Bead Game*. Again, the bourgeois, his material possessions and pretensions—the conventional bourgeois which Hesse would have become had he completed his schooling—is constantly reviled; and yet the bourgeois life-style (while he is *A Guest at the Spa* or is *Moving to a New House*) is something he resists only by recording his doubts about it. And then, while much of Hesse's lyrical and fantastic writing is a hymn to the pleasures of the solitary imagination, the world of child-like dreaming, the other side of the coin is a lamentation at loneliness, a bitter sense of the isolation felt by the creative artist. Two sides to every

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question are constantly there: the background which the young Hesse rejected is always invisibly pulling him back. He cannot give full answers to the great questions in mystical terms because there is something puritan, rational and down-to-earth in his personality which prevents a final surrender to nonsense.

THIS DIMENSION of conflict in Hesse provides nothing so simple as a solution, a panacea, for the "alienated youth". What it does provide is something more like a faithful mirror of some current crises of belief, offering individual readers varying degrees of identity with characters —or mostly one recurring character—in states of acute confusion and doubt. One would hazard that members of the Hesse following have some, or all, of these: a sense of alienation from family and society, and some considerable guilt about it; a scepticism about all authority, but a reverence for learning and humanistic achievement; a pacifist philosophy; a dislike of technological civilisation as manipulated by the bourgeois or the man of ambition; a respect for the innocence and the insights of children; a mild feeling (not an extreme or doctrinaire one) that the "neurotic" may have more sense than the "normal" man; a quietist rather than a revolutionary attitude; a detached, not an intense, respect for the wisdom of the East. *Beneath the Wheel, Gertrude, Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf* allow the rebels, the lonely, the questing dreamers, and the conflict-ridden to observe their own perplexities and dilemmas and conclude that they are a rational, not a neurotic, response to a society which has its values wrong. Which they are; but Hesse's formulations are more of a consolation to the individual than a set of answers for society as a whole.

Hesse himself would probably have been disconcerted by the size of this following, but in the last resort some features of the cult might have pleased him. Seekers of instant, all-embracing solutions have gone (like the young man in the Baden incident) in other, crazier directions, frequently Eastern ones. The more whimsical drop-outs from the crudities of modern reality have quietly found their way to Middle Earth. The nihilists have found solace in Sylvia Plath, and the despondent cynics have beaten paths to the doors of the sick humorists. The cult of Hesse has been less irrational, less complacently sure of itself, more strongly influenced by the uncertainties of Hesse himself—sensitive and intelligent by the standards of these things, and not a bad reflection of the withdrawn and misanthropic, yet strangely honest and attractive, personality which begot it. Concerning the misinterpretations of *Steppenwolf* by the over-enthusiastic,

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Hesse, finally, resignedly said:

> May everyone find in it what strikes a chord in him and is of some use to him! But I would be happy if many of them [his readers] were to realize that the story of the Steppenwolf pictures a disease and crisis—but not one leading to death and destruction, on the contrary: to healing.

Hesse might be gratified today by the benign uses of his writings, even if—to do his modesty justice—he might be embarrassed by the claims of major status to which he knew he was not especially entitled.

FOR ALL THIS, the cult remains something of an opiate, the writings a comfort to the alienated rather than any kind of spur to action. Part of the reason for this lies in the very great skill—apparent in these *Autobiographical Writings* as elsewhere—with which Hesse modulates between the real world and the world of dream and fantasy: one feels, in reading him at his best, that concrete, objective reality and solipsistic dreaming *do* actually relate and connect; Hesse never entirely leaves the ground. This makes the kind of escape-route he provides very convincing. Machine-civilisation, the pursuit of material goals, the multifarious awfulness of modern living can be rejected because Hesse succeeds in making it appear that there is another, better kind of world in existence alongside it; something objectively there, and attainable. But in fact it is no less of a fairy-tale world than any other.

Hesse strove, and managed, to refine away the worst things of life in writings, often of great purity, eloquence and readability, which make this personal dream world very plausible. The autobiographies (written in no particular order over half a century) provide an invaluable and fascinating complement to all that one guesses of this process from the novels—which are mostly, themselves, autobiography very thinly disguised. The talented child who wishes to be a magician sees the world becoming paler and emptier as the rigours of scholastic learning are imposed upon him. Deciding to be a writer or nothing at all, he absconds from school and compensates for his failure to live up to the family ideals by retreating uncompromisingly into the world of his own imagination. The bitter stuff of these struggles is skated over in an attack on "reality":

> Reality is what one must not under any circumstances be satisfied with, what one must not under any circumstances worship and revere, for it is accidental, the offal of life. And it is in no wise to be changed, this shabby, consistently disappointing and barren reality, except by our denying it and proving in the process that we are stronger than it is. (*Life Story Briefly Told*)

At the end of this particular autobiographical piece he projects himself into the future, imagines himself put in jail, and "escapes" by jumping into a train disappearing into a tunnel which he has painted on the wall of his cell. In the longest and most rewarding pieces, *A Guest at the Spa* and *Journey to Nuremberg*, he depicts himself distilling interest, insight and a sense of the wholeness of existence from the comic or pathetic routines of a "cure" at Baden, and surviving the exertions of a reading tour with sonorous speculations on his chances of transcending the noisome reality which thrusts itself at him. (He concludes that humour will help a lot; which is both reassuring, and characteristic of Hesse.) The principal effort in these partial accounts of passages of his life—they are not literal accounts, not factual in detail and certainly not frank self-examinations—is to replace the ordinary world and its tedious demands with a less tawdry, more serene, more acceptable one. As in the novels, he succeeds in conveying a sense of the possible existence of such a world—that is, its existence in an attitude of mind—even if he cannot prove it and reach it. The immaculate, pellucid prose, the pure, austere accounts of his experiences somehow *contain* it.

Thus, in the end, Hesse may have been more right about himself than he knew, in the reply which he was too exhausted to give to the young seeker after truth at Baden. In his writings, the

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"pattern of language stuff, of language yarn" contain the secret; they do possess that "immeasurable worth" greater than "the measurable worth of the content." It is, very simply, that the serene style (concealing ugly episodes, tensions and self-doubtings), the careful selection (and rejection) of detail, the measured, dignified treatment of his small range of themes is in fact *all*. There are no answers, no solutions: only the posing of a series of questions which similar self-doubters could understand, appreciate and derive consolation from because Hesse had asked them in ways which helped to make them valid. His widespread latter-day influence may not exactly have been invigorating; but it has, in its mild way, been positive and beneficent, a gentle, discerning, eminent minor writer's critique of a real world which has moved farther and farther from the ideal which he imagined himself to be defining.

The Big Race

Lowell's Visions and Revisions—By DOUGLAS DUNN

ROBERT LOWELL has always been overtly ambitious. Our contemporary literary climate sees this as presumptuous, or American. And, in Lowell's analysis, it *is* American. Alvarez, in his *Under Pressure,* records Lowell as having said:

> We have some impatience with the sort of prosaic, everyday things of life, that sort of whimsical patience that other countries may have. That's really painful to endure: to be minor and so forth. We leap for the sublime. You might say that American literature and culture begin with *Paradise Lost*. . . .

As a state of mind, that does go some way towards explaining the grandeur Lowell seems always to have aimed for. In *Notebook*, however, and its current revisions and sequels—*History, For Lizzie and Harriet,* and *The Dolphin*[1]—Lowell's "sublime" is contemporary, recognisable and domestic. He does not overreach from modern society and its inmates to the timelessness of a grand mystery, a cosmic vale in which the wretched soul of modern man could repose and be content that the unknowable is happily larger and more significant than what is lived.

Lowell's conception of a sublime is literary: he presents it as much by reference to the past as by any exaltation of the present. "Our monotonous sublime", he says at the end of "Waking Early Sunday Morning"—it is an ambivalent sublime, even pessimistic, around which it is the fate of modern men, and the poet, to be "orbiting forever lost." Such a despair contradicts the ideas of Yeats and Eliot on matters of the poet's attitude to society. Yeats and Eliot would have turned the clock back, Yeats to locate the artist in a supposed Renaissance unity of thought, feeling and polity, and Eliot in an ideal Christian State. Lowell's view opts implicitly for individualism. Of the American artist, he says "his existence becomes his art; he's reborn in it and he hardly exists without it."

Lowell has by now been written about in many books, and is put forward as the logical successor to Eliot on the grade of reputations. But it is difficult to say that Lowell has been an innovator, one who by modifying Eliot and Pound has retouched the face of letters. A reason for this has already been implied. Newness and surprise in Lowell's poetry are produced from the intensity with which he writes from his belief in the artist and his life as one. Even here, however, one could reasonably claim that Sylvia Plath's poems honour that belief more convincingly than Lowell's.

Individualism, however, is at odds with the ways in which critics like to organise literary history. An individualist poet may have followers, but with a poetry in which the materials are essentially autobiographical, it is likely to be a case of different lives, different poetries. "Finding one's own voice," as the grannies put it, is now very much a matter of simply writing about oneself.

My point is that in a context of what constitutes an innovation in poems, autobiography is only an emphasis. Sylvia Plath could be said to have innovated in both feeling *and* form; but I doubt if Lowell has. And neither writer has contributed in such a way as to be useful to younger writers, which would, I suppose, be the utility of "innovation", of a socially and artistically impressive originality. Perhaps it boils down to an understanding that innovation in poetry is unlikely in our future to carry the weight of change exerted by Eliot and Pound. And if that is true, it is a matter for the deepest regret; because if it is

[1] *History*, £2.95. *For Lizzie & Harriet*, £1.40. *The Dolphin*, £1.75. By ROBERT LOWELL. Faber & Faber.

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true, it represents the defeat of the arts by the social conditions in which contemporary arts are produced.

In Lowell's case, this still leaves us with much more than *Life Studies*. His three new books demonstrate more than ever that the life of the artist and the life of the man are the essential materials. This, however, ought not to be the crucial interest of poems. A poet's life in his poems is merely a literary occasion, a narrative on which much else ought to pivot. Lowell's remarks about *Life Studies* in the *Paris Review* (Spring, 1961) are equally true of the three offspring of *Notebook*:

> Your actual experience is a complex flux. I've invented facts and changed things, and the whole balance of the poem was something invented. So there's a lot of artistry, I hope, in the poems. Yet there's this thing: if a poem is autobiographical—and this is true of any kind of autobiographical writing and of historical writing—you want the reader to say, this is true. . . . And there was also that standard of truth which you wouldn't ordinarily have in poetry—the reader was to believe he was getting the real Robert Lowell.

LIKE MOST CONTEMPORARY POETRIES, however, Lowell's is about experience more than truth. And the first question we can ask of such poetries is, Is it self-indulgent? I'd say a writer was that if he overstated his anxiety to himself, and then passed it on to his readers.

To revel in the personal is a clear temptation in our corrupt and divisive literary climate. As a tactic which assists the formation of a "personality of the poem" it is employed, perhaps intuitively, by many contemporary poets, including the very best—Philip Larkin and Peter Porter. Society encourages this. It begins as a modern phenomenon with Byron, energised by Baudelaire, this making of the poet into a cult of himself. Nor is it easy to quarrel with this growth in the repertoire of literary poses. It is not necessarily egotistical. Given the social and literary realities, it appears inevitable. And it only becomes self-indulgent when the pose, and the handling of the materials it possesses as unique, cease to be poetically convincing, becoming instead what is properly meant by "confessional"—an unburdening for personal motives, not social-poetic ones.

Lowell occasionally fails here. What, however, impresses most is the principle of taste which Lowell usually lives up to as he guides himself through painful and revealing materials. As well as being a human principle of behaviour—not so much reticence before strangers as scrupulosity—it has also become a principle of contemporary poetic art. In "Morning Blue", however, from *The Dolphin*, he shows that the rhetoric that looks so technically forceful in *Poems 1938–49* is still likely to crop up in as domestic a setting as the bathroom:

> *The bathwater honks in and in, ten minutes, twenty,*
> *twists of fire and cooling jobless bubbles;*
> *I am exposed, keep guessing if I can take*
> *the chill of the morning and its dressing.*

Common enough a domestic despair it may be, but a stranger coming across this is entitled to egg him on: "Of course you can take it!" The flaw is in the writing, grotesquely exaggerated and not facetiously.

AND SELF-INDULGENCE is what I would call what happens in *History*, especially when he deals with the legendary past. In the three poems called "Clytemnestra" and in "Orestes" he appears to dramatise himself as the son of Agamemnon, whom he calls "lord of murder and proportion." He has attempted to submerge what looks like family history in mythic patterns. No man should associate his predicament with that of legendary heroes. It may be Literature, and it may be an easy way of setting the truth, but it is self-indulgent on a grand scale, seeing one's experience as already legendary and as having obeyed some immutable law of conduct.

"Lord of murder and proportion"—it is a telling cipher for how Lowell sees what he does with personal fact. Orderings of art may honour the characters of the autobiography, but in assuaging the mind of the poet, who lives as well as writes, can deliver a fatal insult to memory.

Poetry honours its subjects. Lowell is intensely aware of this. It is the principle behind elegy and love poem, and so much of these three books is directly addressed to persons living and dead, a celebration of affections, those that are past or that continue as complex alterations, and those insistently alive.

Lowell loves his poets, he accepts them with a gesture of yielding to the venerated past of Literature. In his version of Baudelaire's "Le Gouffre", he writes:

> *I have cultivated this hysteria*
> *with terror and enjoyment till I see*
> *only the infinite at every window,*
> *vague, captivating, dropping who knows where. . . .*
> *Ah never to escape from being and number!*

Lowell relishes such melancholy exhilarations, the turbulence of a self confronting splendid and dispiriting insight.

As for Lowell's methods of writing, unqualified admiration is followed by disapproval of the prolix trot with which he engages one subject after another. His unrhymed fourteen-liner is an ingenious device, but, confronted with some 537 samples, it generates stylistic tediousness. That it is highly mobile and self-contained is proved by his re-ordering within *History*, and his extraction of poems from *Notebook* to make the

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separate sequence of *For Lizzie and Harriet*. It helps him write; he can lean back on it, knowing at least how long the next verse-episode will be. Concise and short, it is an aid to the effects of elegy, brief meditation, dramatic moment and love poem. Not longwinded in itself, excessively deployed it produces a sameness which modern poetry sought long ago to alter. One can be forgiven if, at times, Lowell's enterprise strikes one as *The Prophecy of Islam* disguised as a contemporary *The Prelude*. What saves his writing is an instinctive and waveringly amenable iambic measure. Lines are haunted by rhythm, visited by measures as if they had no home to go to; rhythms are picked up, forgotten, sometimes ruined, frequently asserting themselves with that beautiful near-accuracy of metre so common to contemporary poems, a cadence demanded of words for the sake of feeling.

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE of Lowell's ambition? One answers gladly, "A poet cannot be ambitious enough, and long poems are marvellous." Accepting that is both easy and sentimental. Few contemporary poets have any idea of what it takes to write at length. Posterity, we do know, is a great believer in the immodest and triumphant, the work over which gladdened Muses can wiggle forever. The unity of a long poem can nowadays only be *detected* among the fragments of experience. A long and coherent narrative is elusive, and exhaustively taken care of elsewhere. Nor is it possible for a contemporary poet to rely on traditional ways of forming a long poem. It is unlikely that a poet will ever again make heroes out of men facing up to powers greater than themselves. In Lowell's case, a personal understanding of more earthly concepts (such as "Tradition" and "History") almost seems to take the place of those powers, so that the poet may see himself as his hero, exposed, not to the possibility of divine interference, but to social and domestic realities.

One reads the *Canterbury Tales, Troilus and Criseyde, The Faerie Queen,* Chapman's Homer, *Paradise Lost, The Dunciad, Don Juan,* and *In Memoriam* with greed and amazement. We bask in the sight and experience of a talent at its passionate work, the labour of sustaining virtuosity for page after page. Lowell's contemporary sequences deny him the bravura of such skills, as well as the coherence they imply. He *proceeds*, he does not impress with the effrontery of taking on a scale of work that has become rare. Instead, his form has traditional associations—with the sonnet, and sequences of these such as Sidney's, Daniel's, Shakespeare's, Meredith's, and particularly the sonnets of Baudelaire and John Berryman. He makes what he hopes are major

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poems out of the most noble of the minor forms.

The narrative of *For Lizzie and Harriet* is Lowell's second marriage, its child, its loss; of *The Dolphin*, his third marriage, and another child. Writing so personal, like the best love poems, has a unique exigency, a necessity for the telling which only those implicated can understand. Our enjoyment as readers, or as overhearers, is because we also love. And yet love poems are among the least practised of the poetic options. Love, in contemporary society, is often a means to arrogance and complacency. That, palpably and definitely, is not so of Lowell's poems. Nor is he a cheap exploiter of his marriages for the purpose of a few gritty edges that might harshen statements about himself. Above all, he finds a style that is both uncompromising and tender. Nothing new in love poems, surely; but in contemporary love poems it represents an important renewal:

I'm for and with myself in my otherness,
in the eternal return of earth's fairer children,
the lily, the rose, the sun on brick at dusk,
the loved, the lover, and their fear of life,
their unconquered flux, insensate oneness, painful
"it was. . . "
After loving you so much, can I forget
you for eternity, and have no other choice?

and, from *The Dolphin*

The great circuit of the stars lies on jewellers'
velvet;
be close enough to tell me when I will die—
what will love do not knowing it will die?
No telling, no telling . . . not even a last choice.

History is just as personal, for all its allusions and breadth of time. The world of Lowell's imagination is an amalgam of what exists in an impressionable literary mind living off its store of impressions. His imaginary life never fights against the clamour of domestic realities. Instead, it thrives on them. It is a pity that his love poems have been removed from the larger sequence. There was an imaginative rightness about their presence, given that commonplace truth of the flux of experience.

LOWELL SNATCHES his literary character from scores of poets and literary and historical personalities. He endorses them to himself—the cosmopolitan, the provincial and Horatian, Juvenalian, aristocratic and imperial, religious, Baudelairean, American, Proustian; and he ranges in history from *Genesis* to President Nixon. His history is that of the Modernist poets—it lives in his mind in a language of the present, cross-eyed, synthetic, psychological and wild. It seems, however, to have no intellectual purpose—it is all poetic, personal, and just there, quirkily. He writes of being a boy and spelling over "the fifty feuding states of Greece"—in *Notebook*, it was "naming all fifty states of Paradise", a revision that baffles me, as do many others—and he was *that* kind of boy, and is that kind of man in his poems, a poet of cultural recall.

If his history has no intellectual purpose that I can see—as Sir Walter Scott's was subsequently seen to have, and as Pound's, Eliot's and Yeats's had—it possesses the important virtue of revealing mind and imagination. At times, the historical excuse is no more than an occasion for what Christopher Ricks, in his recent *Listener* review, considers Lowell's dominant theme, marriage. "Topless" from *Notebook*, for example, becomes "Cleopatra Topless", and takes its place in the chronological sequence as a somewhat grotesque meditation on conjugality:

She was the old foundations of western marriage . . .
One was not looking for a work of art—
what do men want? Boobs, bottoms, legs . . .
in that order
the one thing necessary that most husbands
want and yet forgo. She's Cleopatra. . . .

That generalisation about Cleopatra is hardly accurate. It is imaginative, and under strain because of the pressure of getting marriage in whatever the cost. In "Milton in Separation" he appears to be calling attention to himself; and this is immediately followed by a poem "Marriage", a monologue spoken by Milton but with

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fairly obvious affinities to Lowell himself in earlier poems—"Leviathan", "intemperate apocalyptic terms":

From the womb, I say, I scorned Leviathan,
found my intemperate apocalyptic terms . . . .
the Garden open to all and free . . . .
Too long we've hungered for its ancient fruit,
marriage with its naked artifice;

What Lowell says is often novel. In "Cicero, the Sacrificial Killing", he associates Pound with Cicero, mutual partakers of the fate of men overtaken by history. Lowell is wise in that way, the same way that Auden is wise, although Auden proceeds from "common sense" and the impersonal, Lowell from imagination and passionate engagement.

Lowell's past offers him many antithetical connections with the present. Lines in "The Good Life" suggest the White House—"ass-licking for medals on Caesar's peacock lawn." And, more severely, in "Northmen":

The Skyfleets hover cooly in mirage;
our bombers are clean-edged as Viking craft,
to pin the Third World to its burning house. . . .

Unfortunately, his persuasion of the past into an idiom of the present is often mere cartooning, a "Classics Illustrated" writing, about which Apollonian Britishers might feel an onset of rapidly overpowering xenophobia—"Like Henry VIII, Mohammed got religion. . . ."; "Charlemagne loved his three Rs. . . ." And, at times, the language loses its grip on its own wit, and becomes what would be good in prose or conversation, but is lax in poems: "George Eliot, a Countess Tolstoy . . . without Tolstoy."

Lowell is much discussed as a "public poet", and as half of *History* deals with the period from the 1920s to the present, this notion is likely to find even more endorsers. Lowell's tentative and hesitant public stance is literary, and it comes from the same imaginative necessity that made it seem proper for him to write a version of Juvenal's Tenth Satire. Translating Góngora at the end of "The Ruins of Time" (in *Near the Ocean*), Lowell-Góngora says,

The hours will hardly pardon us their loss,
those brilliant hours that wore away our days,
our days that ate into eternity.

Lowell's history, his idea of time, carries a heavy burden of imaginative regret. His sensibility is hurt by involvement in the political fracas. He observes America's confused and imperial present, its defiance of time and judgment as futile as Rome's. He despairs, as in his poem on Martin Luther King's assassination:

At this point of civilisation, this point of the world,
the only satisfactory companion we
can imagine is death. . . .

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Lowell's willingness to be a participating citizen-poet is confounded by the impossibility of poets and poems being either useful or welcome in politics or the community at large. Contemporary poets seek to make their poems *of* realities, to let the imagination act out its social role, an act which need not be one of particulars and criticism, but one of testimony and transcendence. It is an offering of insights and language which the community itself does not possess to the same degree. But how does one find such a language? In "For John Berryman I", Lowell says,

> *I feel I know what you have worked through, you know what I have worked through—we are words; John, we used the language as if we made it.*

Which must have been tiring. But it is true of how a contemporary poet must use his talents, and it explains the radical shifts in poetic in Lowell's career, from *Poems 1938-49* to his three new books.

THERE ARE NO insistent forms to which a contemporary poet feels obliged to owe allegiance. Each time a poet uses Marvell's eight-line verse of tetrameter couplets (as Lowell has done), or the sonnet, or the self-consciously English stanzas Philip Larkin prefers, this indicates a formal *gesture*, a resuscitation, as much as obedience to traditional formal necessities. Versification is needed by poetry; but there have been no contemporary innovations. Free verse is free verse. What Jarrell said of Pound's "versification" can be applied to almost any example of free verse, to Lowell's fourteen-liners, to Projectivist writing, the so-called "composition by field"—"The versification is interesting—there is none."

And formal writing has become representative less of poetry itself than of the poet's attitude to the skills of the poetry of the past. Some say this implies conservative states of mind, a faith in the bourgeois pleasure of beholding the well-made, the article of quality, that which was not bought at Woolworth's. Nor do the careful syllabics of Marianne Moore or Auden suggest themselves as general alternatives.

A contemporary poet is able to *choose* even between the colossal distinctions of a classical or a romantic mode. He can *decide* on his comprehensive attitudes, those areas of tradition he finds preferable, the ways in which he writes and what he believes in. His representative stance is the result of an act of the deliberating will; this makes him free to be self-conscious in a wide

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variety of ways, and in a society which contains many opposing social and political objectives. It is no longer possible to talk cant about "*the* poetry of the Age." Approaches of that sort ended in Auden's 1930s.

Lowell's practice falls between free verse and formal verse. Apollo *and* Dionysus are his friends. He is a ruined edifice, with a corner of Gothic there, some oddments of the Florentine, a few obscene whorls of the Baroque, a flourish of Jefferson's colonial brilliance, Victorian, a few details of Mies van der Rohe, and all haunted by the ghosts of dead poets, reciting in strict metre. Can the author of "Waking Early Sunday Morning" and "Falling Asleep over the Aeneid" really be content with a world-record production of free sonnets, at least one of which is in thirteen lines? For all the beauty of local successes in *History*, and the disturbing charm of his directly addressed love poems, the shimmering dimension of formally perfected thought and feeling (what, in Lowell himself, once appeared a hallmark of contemporary elegance) is too often absent. He has been content with *managing* his lines, with distributing and redistributing parts in a sequence. Lowell is the sub-four-minute miler who, on what was announced as the day of days, wins with a mere 4 minutes 1 second. A tactical race offers only half the glory for the ambitious. Lowell makes Randall Jarrell, his natural critic, say,

What kept you so long,
racing the cooling grindstone of your ambition?
You didn't write, you rewrote . . .

A Moment in the South

How different the day when the great composer
Arrived with carriages in the white piazza,
Advanced through avenues of oleander
To where his willing host, full-bearded patron
Of ancient lineage, greeted him on the loggia.

This was the place (the genius knew at once)
Where he would set that awkward second act:
A hanging garden under which the gulf
Spanned sun and haze in a long breadth of blue.
Such was his exclamation to the Count.

The tourists' brochure throbs with reverence
At this munificent and thrilling scene,
Enacted among fragrant southern trees,
When in the white piazza old men sat
Watching the dust rise from those carriages.

Anthony Thwaite

LETTERS

Who is an Intellectual?

M.J.L. asks a tempting question in the August ENCOUNTER. "Who is an intellectual?", he asks. The answer is, of course, Melvin J. Lasky. I know of nobody more obsessively concerned with matters of the intellect, historical, philosophical, political and polemical, if not aesthetical or sociological. That is why ENCOUNTER is such a good monthly meal.

The trouble seems to be that Mr Lasky (that is, of course, you, Mr Editor) cannot accept the accolade because with the most like-minded of his contributors, he prefers to keep the word "intellectual" as a term of reproach, if not abuse, for those others with whom they disagree, or of whom they disapprove. Nothing is more characteristic of ENCOUNTER's fare than the dish of the day consisting of such exemplary and impeccable intellectuals as, say, Professor Beloff or Dr Mishan (or Mr Lasky himself) upbraiding other intellectuals for being intellectuals.

What is really meant, of course, is that they are goodies, while the others are baddies. M.J.L. makes this plain. While he and his friends have seen the light, the other intellectuals have not, refusing to qualify their opinions or change their minds. It is the old, old boast of the elect, as Mr Lasky must know better than most from his own researches.

I remain convinced that ENCOUNTER is itself edited and written by intellectuals of both descriptions (both the Blimps and the less respectable sort). That's why I read it.

DONALD TYERMAN

Westleton,
Suffolk

David Martin's "Naked Person"

IN EMPHASISING THE VALUE of rules and roles, David Martin ["The Naked Person," ENCOUNTER, June] has neglected the real argument behind spontaneity which is not just a belief in "a pure humanity" but a rejection of the prevalent rules and roles found in society. If this is what such things are like (the argument simply runs) then better have none at all.

The answer can of course easily be pressed that they are inevitable, and the onus is on those who imagine otherwise and try to describe any kind of human or animal society without them. But given that such things must be, we should ensure they are as useful and acceptable as possible, and this situation calls for far more flexibility than David Martin seems to allow for.

The problems associated with learning and decision-making at any level are concerned with getting the right balance between some activity or work, and participation, feed-back, response, whatever one might call it. Only too often conflicts arise when many decisions have to be taken and the interests of many people are involved. But because the need is urgently

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felt for a proper balance between those doing some job, with some authority, and those affected, by proper means of consultation (*e.g.* in industry and in local government), by the same token learning at any level has to be a balance between teacher and those taught. The only difference is that the relationship is a more direct one, but the importance of feed-back and criticism is no less valid, and if the role of a university can ever be summed up in a brief phrase it is surely that it is to encourage informed criticism of any aspect of life. Rules, roles, and relations must constantly be subject to criticism. Their acceptability has to be earned and kept just as much as the respect a teacher or anyone in authority needs to really do his job.

Spontaneity is the extreme argument against entrenched inflexibility. Freedom of choice should not be viewed as a luxury paid for by habit and discipline. It is an inevitable concomitant of a flexible and open society at all levels, which is neither without order or appreciation of inherited knowledge, nor dominated by tradition or arbitrary decision-making, and which has to be constantly learning and adapting.

R. BALL

Wadham College,
Oxford

I DON'T RECOLLECT having defended any particular role as sacrosanct or necessarily inflexible. My point was that unless there is structure of some kind nothing is possible including creativity and flexibility.

DAVID MARTIN

London

Malaysia Mislaid

THE SITUATION in *Malaysia* is complex enough without Peter Schmid [ENCOUNTER, August] confusing us with his eccentric terminology. Let us forget "Malaya" (except as the name of a hotel) and try to get "Malaysia" and "Malay" clear in our minds. The former is the name of a country, the latter is the name of a race. All citizens of Malaysia are Malaysians, whether Malay or Chinese or Indian or Eurasian or European, but only Malays are Malay—though some of these may be, by birth, Indonesian Malays rather than Malaysian Malays.

Mr Schmid tells us that in the centre of Kuala Lumpur, in the evening, "I don't see a single Malaysian face among the milling throng (at most, perhaps, an Indian woman's sari) . . . . " One would suppose that by "Malaysian", here, he means "Malay": but no, "an Indian woman's sari" is placed, rather oddly, in the same category as "a Malaysian face." So by "Malaysian" he must mean on this occasion Malay and/or Indian: i.e., brown faces as distinct from yellow faces (Chinese) . . . European (pinko-grey) and Eurasian (variegated shades) being neither here nor there. The Chinese of Malaysia can perfectly well be "natives" of that country, so it will hardly do for Mr Schmid to talk about "the brown natives of the country . . . dreaming away their time" when by this he presumably means the Malays. Unless, of course, the word "brown" is intended as an adjective differentiating the Malay natives from the Chinese natives: in which case it is an unsound distinction since by this time the Chinese of South-east Asia are often themselves quite brown. Nor will the eating of "no end of heavily-spiced middle-eastern food stuffs" serve as a definitively distinguishing factor—what does "middle-eastern" signify? Moslem? Pork-free? Not-quite-*Far*-Eastern?—since the Chinese are fond of eating too. In *bumi-putra* Mr Schmid has a less ambiguous term, perhaps: it is a Malay word and can be fairly safely taken as referring exclusively to the Malays, with the sense of "indigenous" ("belonging naturally") as distinct from "native" or "possessing citizenship."

On p. 55 Mr Schmid writes, "Malaya—or rather Malaysia, as it has been re-christened since the exclusion of Singapore and the incorporation of Borneo." What a curious distortion of the facts, which (as far as they went) were simple enough! Malaysia was formed in September 1963 by the

Sakharov

In an "Open Letter" from Moscow, Professor Andrei Sakharov has made the following comments on the text of the interview which he recently gave and which was published in ENCOUNTER *last month ("Andrei Sakharov Reconsiders" September pp. 59–63).*

"I have noticed with satisfaction the publication of the text of the interview I gave to the Swedish Radio. Nevertheless, a number of embarrassing slips appear to have occurred in my oral replies to various questions. In the passages which deal with the privileged positions of Party members, there may be the incorrect impression that a Party member always has greater privileges than those outside the Party, especially when both occupy the same job. This is not so, and I should like to correct that inaccuracy. Otherwise I should like to stand by all the other points which I made in connection with the influence of Party membership in the advancement of careers in the hierarchy and with the real privileges of the ruling Party and Governmental caste. On the subject of the Chinese problem I tried to reformulate my views on Sino-Soviet relations, but I did not intend to leave the impression that the Chinese variant of socialism, with its Red Guards and Re-education through Work and its Quotation Liturgy, appeared to me harmless or attractive.

"The final inaccuracy which I should like to mention concerns my own personal situation. I remarked that my own position remained one of special privilege, not in relation to that of my other colleagues but in contrast to the average living standard of the country. This needs to be qualified. Earlier on I did have, according to Soviet standards, considerable funds. In the year 1969, after I published my Memorandum, I returned to the Soviet State a major portion of these funds (all in all some 139,000 rubles) because it seemed to me to be undeserved. This decision now appears to me to have been altogether mistaken."

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federation of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore: Singapore left (or, rather, was asked to leave) two years later. On p. 58 "the still-ossified Malaysian feudal structure" leaves us wondering whether Mr Schmid means "Malay" rather than "Malaysian." The proximity of the adjective "historic" suggests that he intends "Malay" since the word is hardly applicable, except in some very subtle sense, to something which is only ten years old. Similarly, on p. 56 the "Malaysians" for whom jobs are being created are presumably Malays. And presumably "the Malayanised Hilton Hotel" should read "Malayised", since it is unlikely that Mr Schmid is telling us that jobs in this hotel are reserved for people of whatever race belonging to "Malaya", i.e., that part of Malaysia which is not Sabah or Sarawak. The last accepted use of the word "Malayanised" described the transfer of governmental posts from British expatriates to citizens of Malaya or Singapore in the late 1950s.

Confusion is bad enough in itself. What is worse is that by his inadvertent but repeated identification of "Malaysian" with "Malay"—along with his tendentious allusion to "Chinese residents", for he must know that "resident" is something of a dirty word, verging on "foreign parasite"—Mr Schmid may seem to lend support to the racialists, and specifically to those who would like to establish a firm and final distinction between "Malaysian" and "Chinese" by throwing their fellow citizens who happen to be of Chinese race into the sea.

D. J. ENRIGHT

London

ED. NOTE—How we wish that Dennis Enright had been at his old desk, bringing his Malay—sorry, Malaysian—knowledge to bear on our faulty translation of Peter Schmid's impeccable report! We regret the unintentional offence given.

Kafka & Felice Bauer

NOT HAVING READ *Briefe an Felice* I am not sure how pertinent it is to wonder what Felice made of this strange lover as your columnist *"R"* does in the June issue.

Nevertheless, Kafka fans might be interested to learn that Felice Bauer, whom I repeatedly saw in 1935 when she was a refugee living in Florence, spoke of this "love affair" very often. Miss Bauer was by that time a middle-aged spinster. She seemed to draw most of her satisfactions from memories although she had an intense emotional attachment to a very young, very handsome fellow-refugee whom she obviously enjoyed mothering in a possessive fashion. She lived in an apartment cluttered with objects of her Berlin past, without giving any particular direction to her existence.

When I returned to Florence after the War I was told that Miss Bauer had been rounded up as so many others, and had not been heard of again. I hardly think I would remember her today had she not been weaving the "adoring" Kafka into her conversation and shown her pride in this fact without ever expressing a reciprocal feeling for the great writer.

ELLEN B. HILL

University of Rome

AUTHORS

William Trevor's new novel, *Elizabeth Alone*, is due from Bodley Head in October. His short story, "Going Home", appeared in the May 1972 ENCOUNTER. . . .

Richard Crossman was Minister of Housing and Local Government and then Secretary of State for Social Services in the 1964–70 Labour government. He was Editor of the *New Statesman* from 1970–72. . . .

Joachim Fest is a young German historian, author of *The Faces of the Third Reich* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), who has just completed a new biography of Adolf Hitler. He lives in Hamburg, and edits the "Essay" department for *Der Spiegel*. He is shortly to join the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as a senior editor.

Arthur Koestler's article is based on a recent lecture to the British Academy (in the "Thank-offering to Britain" series), and will be published as a pamphlet by Oxford University Press in October. . . .

John Weightman is Professor of French Language and Literature at Westfield College in the University of London, and the author of *The Concept of the Avant-Garde* (Alcove Press). . . .

Melvin J. Lasky's *Utopia and Revolution* will be published by the University of Chicago Press and Macmillan (London) in 1974. . . .

Sidney Hook is Professor of Philosophy at New York University. His most recent book was *Academic Freedom and Academic Anarchy* (1970). . . .

Max Beloff is Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Oxford, and a Fellow of All Souls. . . .

Kingsley Amis's article will appear in *G. K. Chesterton: A Centenary Appraisal*, edited by John Sullivan, which Paul Elek will publish in May 1974. . . .

Peter Porter's latest collections of poems are *Preaching to the Converted* and *After Martial* (Oxford University Press). . . .

Alan Brownjohn is a lecturer at the Battersea College of Education in London. His most recent volume of poems was *Warrior's Career* (Macmillan). . . .

Douglas Dunn is the author of *Terry Street* and *The Happier Life* (Faber). . . .

The drawing of Hitler on p. 18 is by **Jaroslav Bradác**. . . . Cover design by **Colin Banks** and **John Miles.**

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